

EN

Prater Digital

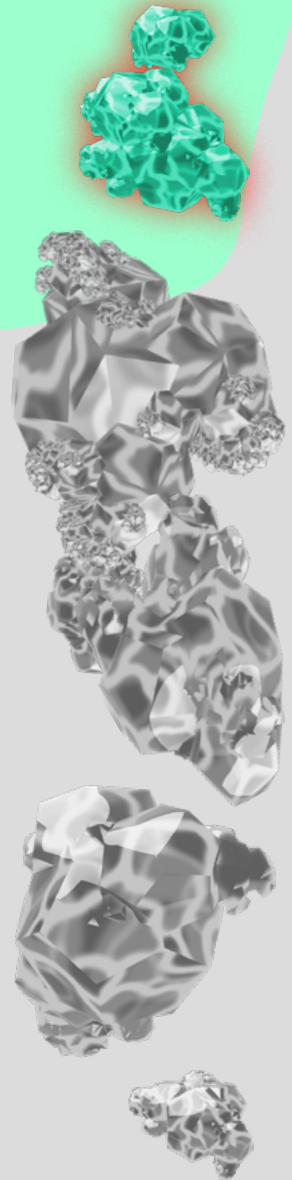
Learnings



Learnings #2

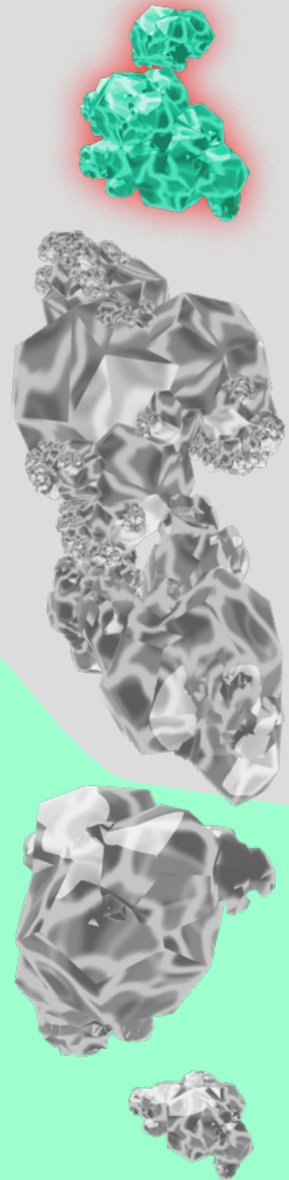
The knowledge acquired in the pilot stage of Prater Digital was subsequently made available in Learnings.^{*} In Learnings #2, we will continue to reflect on our work and assess the further development of Prater Digital in 2021/22. →

^{*}The aim of Learnings was to present our learning process, reflect on our own work at regular intervals, set new goals and, if necessary, to revise and redefine the definition of Prater Digital.












← The focus is not only on the curatorial and conceptual work in Prater Digital, but also on technical aspects, effects on our working methods and structures, art education, and audience feedback.

The following text makes use of different formatting styles. In the main text, we describe our **programme**. Event formats from the Prater Galerie website are introduced in italics; these can be seen as the starting point of our work. In the progress report that follows, we reflect on the entire process, implementation and our results. The **focus areas** denote core texts that summarise individual topics and important findings (e.g. public relations and communication within the team). We have also summarised **(+)** short tips, **(●)** tricks and **(◆)** hints from our practical experience in additional text boxes. Additional **(*)** selected (technical) terms are also explained. About halfway through this publication, we introduce the artists who worked in Prater Digital on **residencies** in 2021 and 2022. There is an **orientation key →** in the document here. ✕



Key

-  Continue to next text section
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-  End of text section
-  Tips
-  Tricks
-  Hints
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Learnings #2

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Introduction

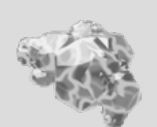
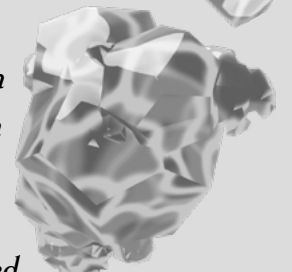
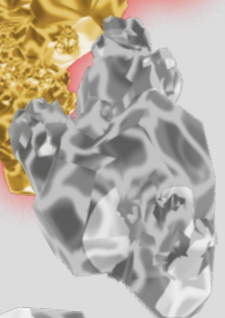
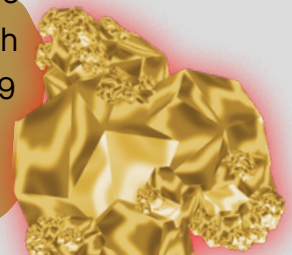
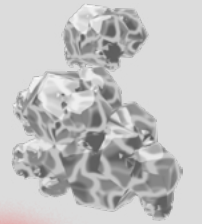
In 2020, the municipal Prater Galerie in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg launched the Project 'Prater Digital'.

It was the first attempt to conceptualise and embed a digital cultural offer consisting of various event formats and online exhibitions within the structures of a municipal gallery. The pilot phase of the project was funded by the Förderprogramm digitale Entwicklung im Kulturbereich (Programme for Digital Development in the Cultural Sector) and implemented under the artistic direction of Julian Kamphausen. Although the conceptual work on Prater Digital began before the COVID-19 pandemic, the project gained new relevance with the first lockdown measures.

Pilot Phase (2020)

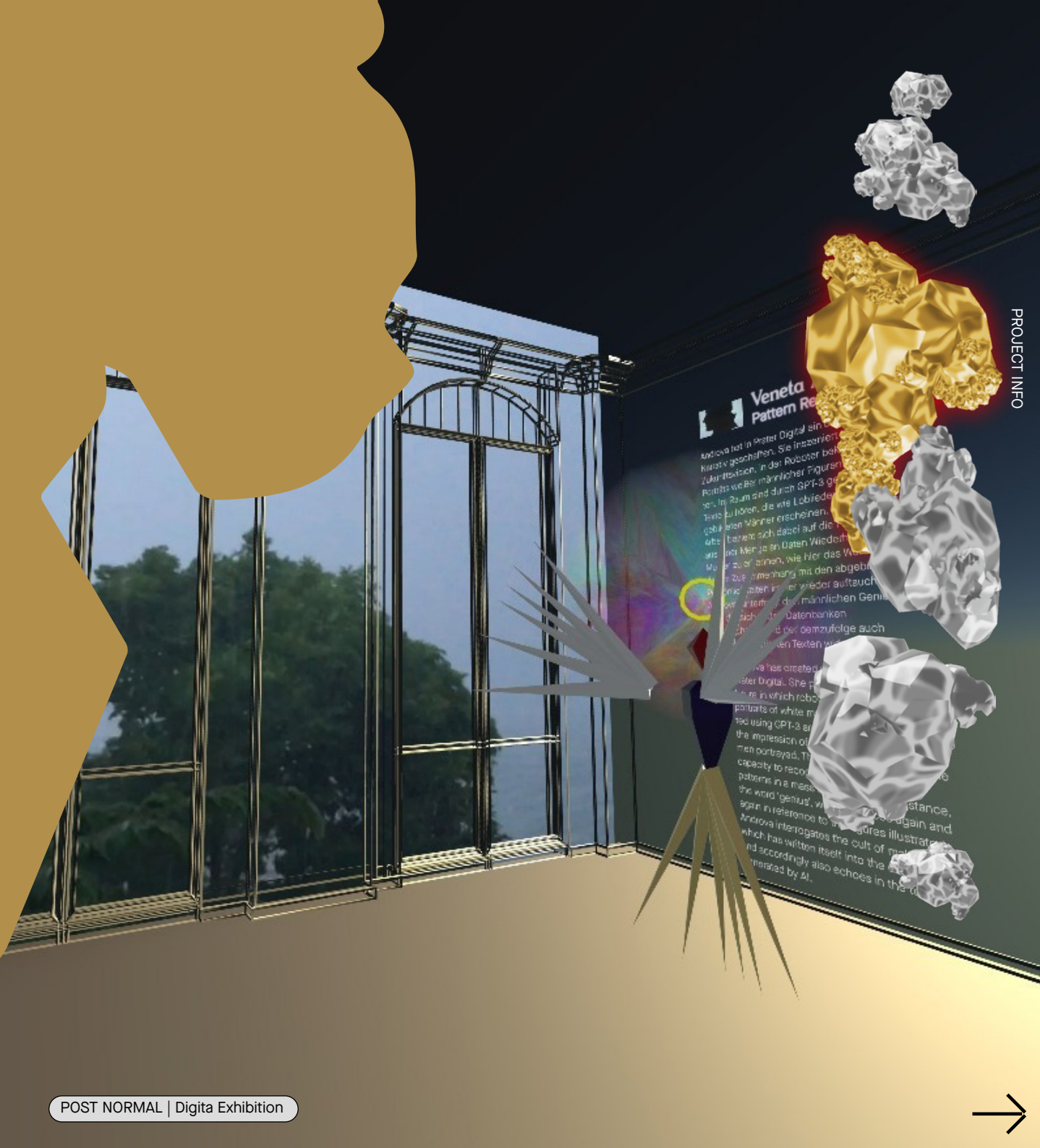
Prater Digital is an attempt to experience art and online interaction in a new way and to digitally present an institute steeped in a rich cultural history on equal terms for everyone.

In a pilot phase in December 2020, artists, experts and the public explored what kind of digital techniques are suitable and need acquiring so that the visual and performing arts can be presented effectively online. New ways of approaching art within a digital space were created, complete with a secure, ethically sound data infrastructure.

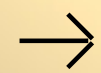


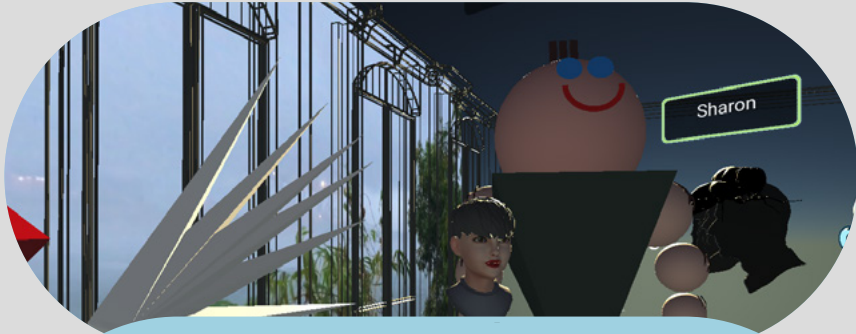
← Prater Digital consists of various modular spaces that host encounters, meetings, exhibitions and performances. The Prater spaces are open to artists and projects in the cultural sector as well as other interested parties.

As part of the pilot phase, two 3D rooms were designed and made available for further use. One of the two virtual spaces was based on the Prater's historic foyer, whose walls and tables displayed motifs from the Prater's wide-ranging history, curated by the programmer and artist Berrak Nil Boya. Gloria Schultz based the virtual gallery room on plans for the gallery's future physical space. Both rooms are based on the actual Berlin Prater building. Workshops, performances and discussion events were held in these spaces for the Prater Digital launch. ✕

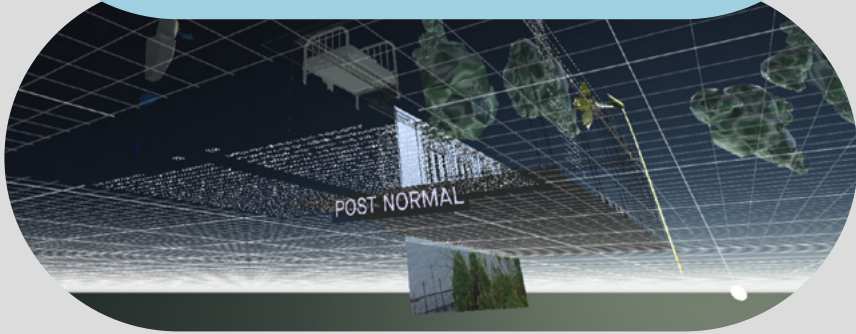


PROJECT INFO





Mozilla Hubs

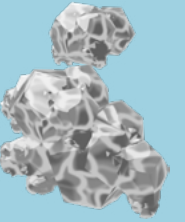
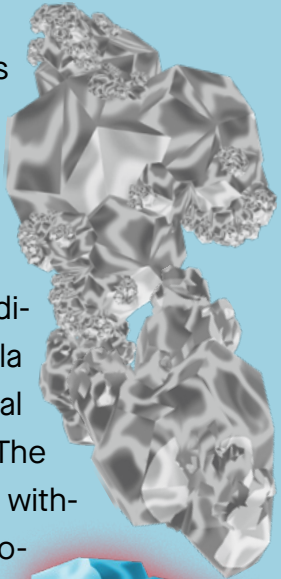
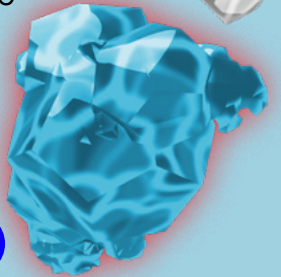


2 Software, whose source code is publicly accessible and can be updated and developed collaboratively.

3 A character representing a user on different platforms, in virtual online worlds or in computer games.

4 Graphics programmes with which 3D elements can be built, modelled, textured or animated. They are used for computer games, but also for animated films.

Prater Digital was set up on [Mozilla Hubs](#). Mozilla Hubs is an open-source tool **2** for creating 3D virtual spaces where users can meet as avatars. **3** These avatars can move through the rooms, chat with each other, as well as embed and share content. Mozilla Hubs works in popular contemporary browsers, with no need for additional installation of programmes. The rooms on Mozilla Hubs are, however, limited to 25 participants; additional visitors can watch from the lobby, but cannot interact. The rooms can be built using Spoke, a simple online editor, without the need for programming skills or 3D modelling programmes. **4** Spoke works like a building-block system with a library of pre-built elements and models. You can also embed images, videos or audio clips. But to model new 3D objects or build new rooms, programming and 3D modelling skills are needed.

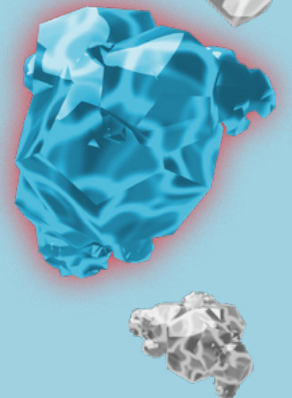




← In terms of structure and aesthetics, Mozilla Hubs is reminiscent of first-person shooter computer games. In these, the player acts in the first-person perspective in a walk-through game world. The controls are also based on computer games – the avatars move using the arrows on the keyboard and can change their viewing perspective using the mouse.

Because of its user-friendliness and free, open infrastructure, Mozilla Hubs is the platform of choice for most cultural institutes. The 3D environment is reminiscent of a classic physical exhibition space due to its room structuring, even though the technology has its own particular pros and cons.

In addition, the rooms can also be visited with VR (virtual reality) devices, offering a low-threshold option of building your own VR worlds. ✕



FOCUS

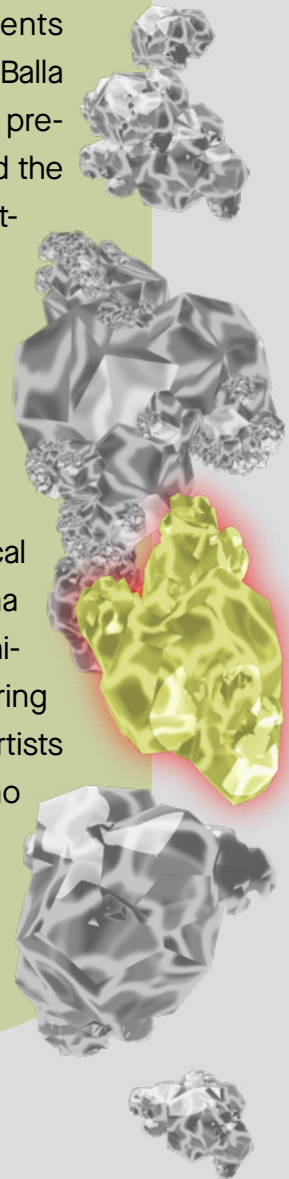


Evening Meet-Ups

Live Events

The evening meet-ups are casual discussion forums that take place every two weeks at Prater Digital. Members of the advisory panel on the future of the Prater and people involved in the gallery can meet colleagues and friends in digital spaces when physical encounters are not possible. They can exchange views not only on the future of the Prater but also on cultural policy issues, the Prater Galerie's exhibition programme and current challenges.

At the first evening meet-up, Lena Prents (Director of the Prater Galerie) and Tina Balla (Head of the Department of Art and Culture) presented their visions for the Berlin Prater and the Prater Galerie. At a different evening meet-up, Uwe Gössel (freelance dramaturge and member of the advisory panel of the Prater Galerie) and Daniel Wetzel (working with Rimini Protokoll since 2000) spoke about their projects and experiences with digital formats. Curator friends and people working in the arts also presented their local projects. Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu and Joanna Warsza spoke about The Balconies, an exhibition in public space that took place during the pandemic in Prenzlauer Berg. The artists from Artspring talked with filmmakers who participated in their festival. →



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← While using this communication format we discovered that the type of usage and functions offered by virtual 3D spaces are not self-explanatory – neither for the speakers nor for the audience. These spaces require a different type of delivery than, say, a Zoom meeting. Instead of watching a static presentation, the audience can be guided through virtual space

and the conversation can be dynamic. Because most presenters had no prior experience of this technology, they weren't able to take full advantage of these opportunities to tap into new storytelling strategies. Discussions like these require in-depth technical preparation in addition to the content. Speakers need to become familiar enough with the tool and its interface to be able to navigate the space as well as be in charge of the discussion and feel comfortable doing so. Depending on the topic being discussed, the space and its structure must be rethought and implemented. It is paramount that content is planned in tandem with technical aspects. →



In addition to the general audio pre-sets in the rooms, each participant can turn the volume up or down for the person speaking. The same applies to objects with sound, like video clips.

Communication. within the team.

Mozilla Hubs cannot host truly private conversations (even in chat). All communication – including tech support and agreements within the team not meant for the public – is audible in the room. →

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← For many visitors, it was also difficult to respond to the space and its potential while focusing on the conversations themselves. So, in some cases, it may be useful to project the person speaking into the room via the computer camera, thus combining the 3D environment with a two-dimensional video. The facial expressions of the person speaking make it easier for listeners to follow. In sum, a technical introduction is an essential aspect of the visitor experience and needs time. →

← That's why, especially for live events, it has proven helpful to set up a second communication channel for troubleshooting.⁵ A chat group that also runs via another device, e.g. mobile phone, is ideal. This allows communication to take place in an emergency without disrupting the flow of the event and provides a backup for organisers.

We have developed scripts⁶ for our team to help them run events as smoothly as possible. Clear division of roles in the team is useful: one person was responsible for the content and introduction, moderated formats and took care of the speakers. A second person was responsible for visitor tech support. Ideally, this person is available to everyone by phone (i.e. a hotline) to assist with Mozilla Hub issues. This requires a relatively good understanding →

⁵Troubleshooting – a systematic search for mistakes, in order to improve user experience.

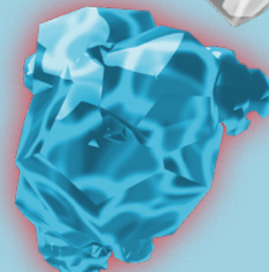
⁶Our scripts are step-by-step guides as to who does what and when. This gives us a clear overview of where others are and what they are doing, even in virtual space.



← of different browsers and systems. In retrospect, we realised that it would be better to provide a video conference link in advance. This enabled us to directly access the desktop of the person seeking help via the 'share screen' function, making it easier to fix issues. ✕


Technical. introduction. for visitors

First, we need to ensure that all participants can move around with their avatars and control the audio settings. A previous explanation of the basic functions was sent via email in which we pointed out that it takes time to become familiar with them. With the help of an individual greeting, we ensured that participants could move their avatars. →



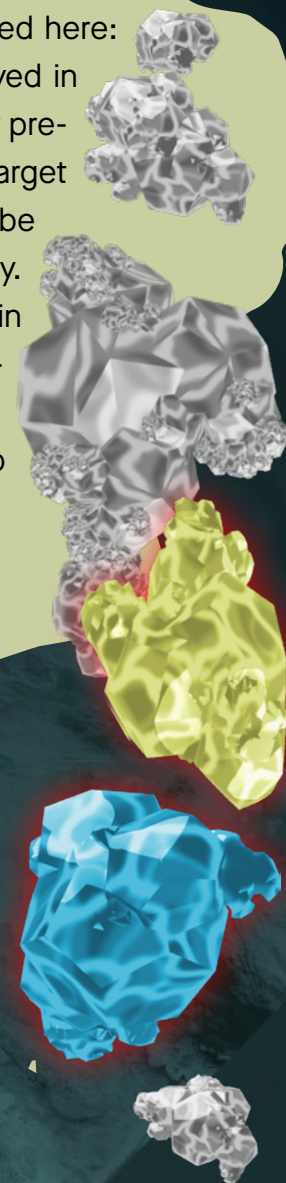
FOCUS





← Participants should be acquainted with the event timeline, in case rooms have to be switched, for example. In our experience, the links in Mozilla Hubs (which appear as images) are not intuitively identified as links by visitors. In live events, it is better if participants don't change rooms individually, but if rooms are switched like a backdrop instead. This has the advantage that the group remains together and the event link remains unchanged. It also allows visitors to join the group later. The same applies to participants whose connection was briefly interrupted and who have to rejoin the room. ✕

← In summary, the following must be critically noted here: the format of the evening meet-ups was not conceived in sufficient detail and the series could have been better prepared, both technically and in terms of content. The target audience should have been more explicitly defined to be able to prepare the events and participants accordingly. We are also aware that it takes time for a format to gain traction and interest audiences. To move more comprehensively into the realm of 3D space and be able to discuss concrete artistic approaches, we came up with the idea of a digital residency programme. ✕



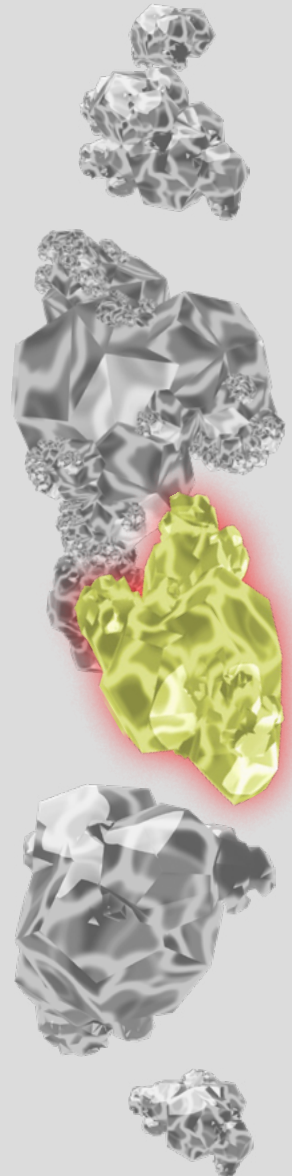
Digital residencies

The Prater Galerie offers two and three-week digital residencies to local and international artists. We invite artists to meet the challenges of a digital exhibition and test their work in the spaces of Prater Digital.

New art projects do not have to be developed specifically for Prater Digital during this time; rather, the residency is conceived as an exploration of how one's work can function within a digital space [...]

Artistic work in Mozilla Hubs

In the context of the residency programme, we were interested in how artistic work relates to digital exhibition space. What opportunities does 3D space offer when expansion into 'infinity' is an option, for example? What happens when visitors can view work from all sides while in flight mode and are even able to fly through it? What new forms of viewing and discussion does this space offer? →



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← The artists invited did not need any particular expertise in 3D modelling but did need to bring an interest in experimenting with virtual 3D space. They were encouraged to seek new forms of implementation and presentation, and to push the boundaries of their work on Prater Digital using Mozilla Hubs. Although the residencies were conceived for three weeks, most of the artists continued working on their projects beyond this period. This was also because they developed new works or settings rather than simply transferring existing work to virtual space or documenting works in digital form. To be able to implement these ambitious projects, we needed external support from programmers.

It's relatively easy to insert images or videos on Mozilla Hubs. But the results are less accurate than in physical space or layout programmes. They are often rather makeshift and so, not ideally suited to artistic work. To make major adjustments and work more accurately, the rooms need altering with the Spoke editor. →

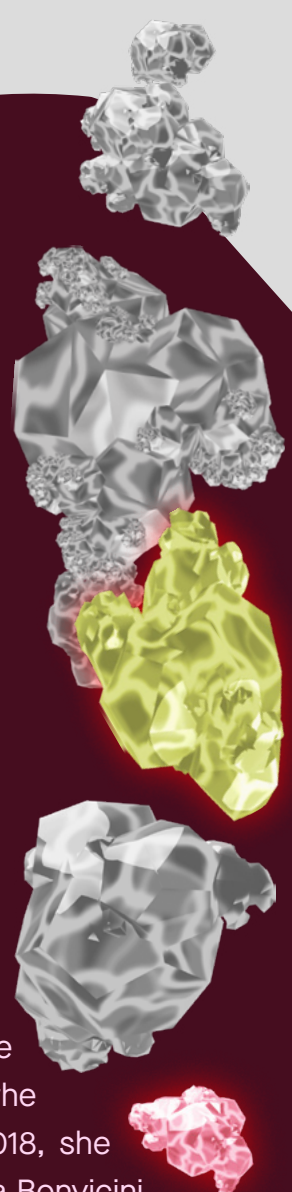
The resident artists

Weathering

Juliane Tübke

[Image →](#)

Juliane Tübke studied Art History in a Global Context at the Freie Universität Berlin (Free University of Berlin) before switching to the UdK (Berlin University of the Arts). In 2018, she completed her studies under Prof. Monica Bonvicini and was subsequently awarded the President's Prize of the UdK Berlin. Mostly for her site-specific



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← projects, she has been invited to several international residencies, most recently the 2019 bangaloREsidency at the Goethe Institute in India. Tübke's work has been shown at numerous exhibitions, including Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien (2020), Haus am Lützowplatz in Berlin (2019), and Pepper House/Kochi-Muziris Biennale Foundation in India (2019). She lives and works in Berlin.

In her long-term project, Weathering, Tübke examines the influence of weather and water on people and their environment. Since 2019, she has been interviewing people from the port city of Kochi (Kerala, India) where she began the project two years ago. The interviews form the foundation of the Weathering With Me website, which she further developed in the exhibition spaces of Prater Digital.

For Prater Digital, Juliane Tübke transferred her website to a 3D space. Her drawings float through a large room like clouds, while the imprints of surfaces formed by water (the size of a hand in the original) lie like giant rocks in the large room she chose as the location for

her work. By placing two-dimensional images in 3D space in this way, she has created a strange, monumental sculptural effect that plays with dimension and spatiality.

Hannah and Martin | Post Normal

Sharon Paz

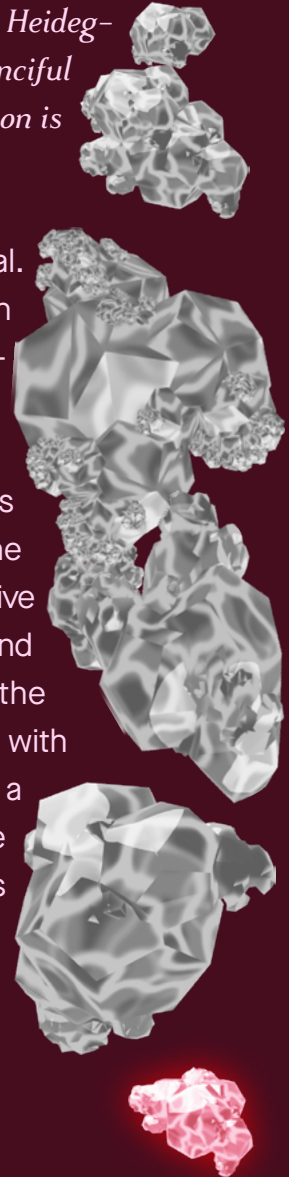
Image →

Born in 1969 in Ramat Gan, Israel, Sharon Paz lives and works in Berlin. She graduated with an MFA in Fine Arts from Hunter College in New York City. She has shown her work in exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum Wesenburg in Bremen, Smack Mellon in New York City, the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art and the Petach Tikva Museum of Art in Israel, as well as at numerous festivals, including the Transmediale 11 in Berlin.

Paz developed a digital performance during her residency at Prater Digital. Based on an imagined conversation, she highlighted various aspects of the complex relationship between

Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger. In this 'performance', a fanciful journey between truth and fiction is created.

Sharon Paz created a narrative work for Prater Digital. Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger appeared as animated figures in several spaces. While she assembled these from existing modules and models using Spoke, the figures were formed from archive images of the two thinkers and subsequently animated by the artist. The evening meet-up with Sharon Paz was announced as a performance. It was live in the sense that the audience was taken from one scene to the next during the event. →



ARTISTS



← Crystals Are the Flashpoint of a Benthic Dream

Michelle-Marie Letelier

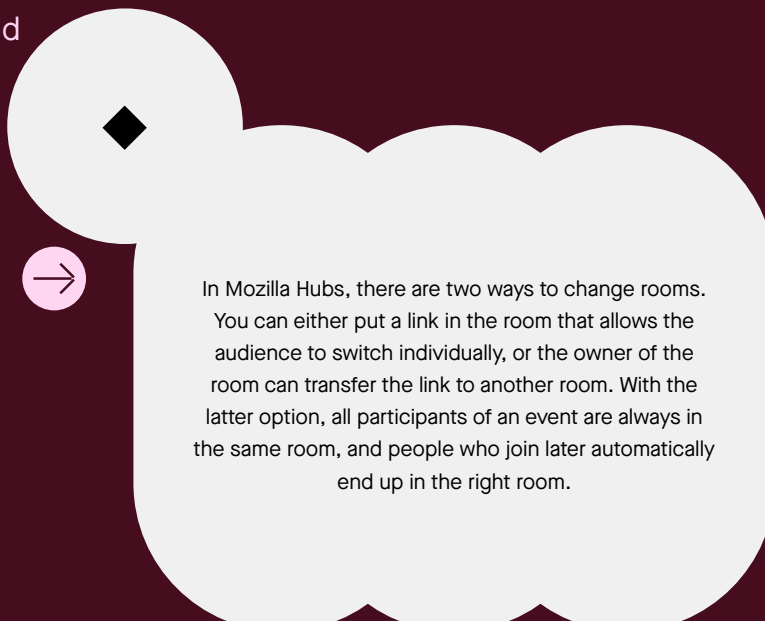
Image →

Born in Rancagua, Chile, Michelle-Marie Letelier currently lives and works in Berlin. She completed her Bachelor of Arts at the Universidad Católica de Chile in 2000. In Berlin, she was a participant in the Goldrausch project for women artists. Letelier's work has been exhibited internationally, including at The Arctic Arts Festival (Harstad); Videonale.18 (Bonn); VRHAM! Festival (Hamburg/online); East Asia Contemporary Art Space (Shanghai); 5th Mercosul Biennial (Porto Alegre); and X Video and Chile's Biennial of Media Arts of Santiago.

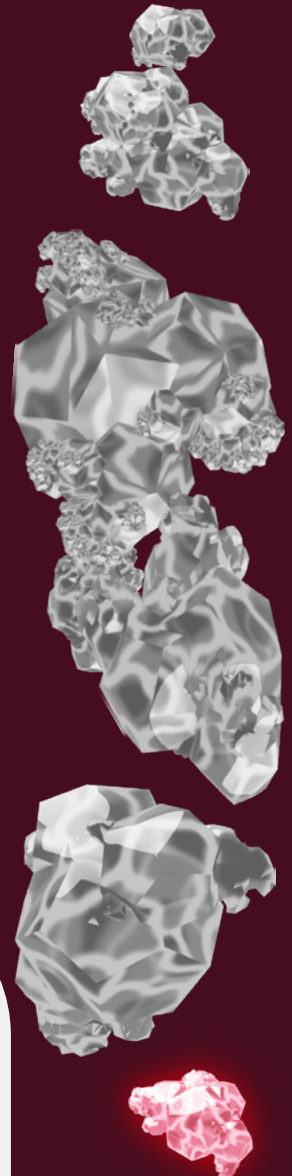
Having grown up in the Atacama Desert, host to the largest copper mine in the world, Michelle-Marie Letelier has been inspired to use coal, copper and saltpetre as raw materials for her art. In doing so, she investigates their properties, such as electrical conductivity and crystallisation. Unlike the raw

materials industry, however, she creates poetic images beyond forms of control. (...) During her residency, Letelier created digital atmospheres by growing crystal formations in virtual worlds from her work The Bone. In doing so, she referenced their metaphorical relevance for information technology in conjunction with her current artistic exploration of the benthic zone.

Michelle-Marie Letelier inserted the 3D model of Prater Digital's gallery into an underwater animation that encircled the space like a spherical projection. In two other rooms, she disbanded the gallery model even further. First, the floor and ceiling of the room disappeared, with shining crystals eating their way into the space. Finally, the gallery itself disappeared completely, and visitors found themselves in an icy landscape with the crystals that seemed to be floating in the underwater video.



In Mozilla Hubs, there are two ways to change rooms. You can either put a link in the room that allows the audience to switch individually, or the owner of the room can transfer the link to another room. With the latter option, all participants of an event are always in the same room, and people who join later automatically end up in the right room.



ARTISTS







Objects

People (1)





← Heat Island: The Wonderful Heartfelt Sentiment

D'Andrade

Image →

D'Andrade is a non-binary musician, poet and writer with a conceptual approach oriented towards Afrofuturism and decolonial theory. They focus on developing investigative works, new and counter-narratives. D'Andrade's tools are sound design, coding, archives and interactions. They co-curated the interdisciplinary festival Jardim Suspenso in Brazil and developed their solo project Noise Vivarium in 2020, centred on open workshops.

D'Andrade's work has been exhibited in Berlin and internationally, including at the Sophiensälen, feldfünf, nGbK, Iwalewahaushaus and the Aké Arts & Book Festival in Nigeria.

D'Andrade developed a poem for Prater Digital that unfolds in a series of successive Mozilla Hub rooms. The poem includes sound

compositions, 3D design and dialogue about the healing process through digital media and virtual reality. Visitors are walked through the biography of a child who has died and lives in a virtual world as part of an archive of human memories. The child draws the audience into its world and tells the story of its family through sound poetry, taking participants on an intimate journey through childhood and into adulthood.

In Prater Digital, D'Andrade animated the characters of their poem in different spaces. In an initial presentation at the evening meet-up, they performed the poem and sounds live for visitors. For the online exhibition, the sounds were recorded and inserted as audio into the rooms.



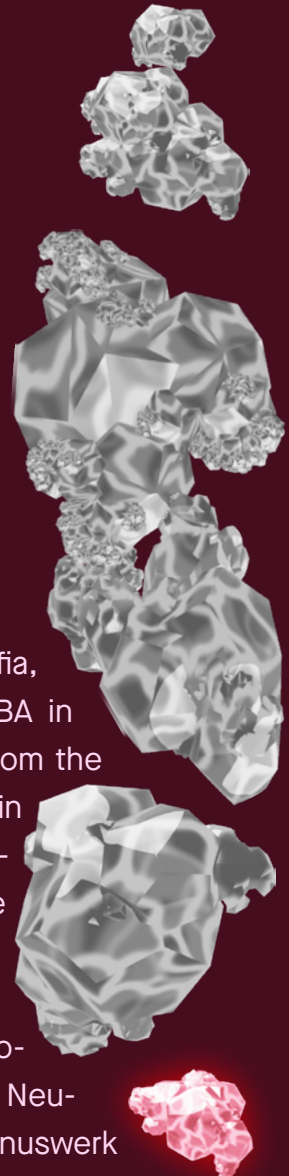
Images can be added in Spoke with a 2D projection or a 360-degree isosceles projection (a format that can be used as a skybox or other types of backdrop).

Pattern Recognition

Veneta Androva

Image →

Veneta Androva, born in Sofia, Bulgaria, graduated with a BA in Art History and Philosophy from the Humboldt University Berlin in 2014. In 2019, she completed a Meisterschülerin course in Fine Art at the Weißensee Academy of Art Berlin. She is the recipient of several scholarships, including the Elsa Neumann Scholarship, the Cusanuswerk Artist's Scholarship, and the Mart Stam Scholarship. In 2020, she was nominated



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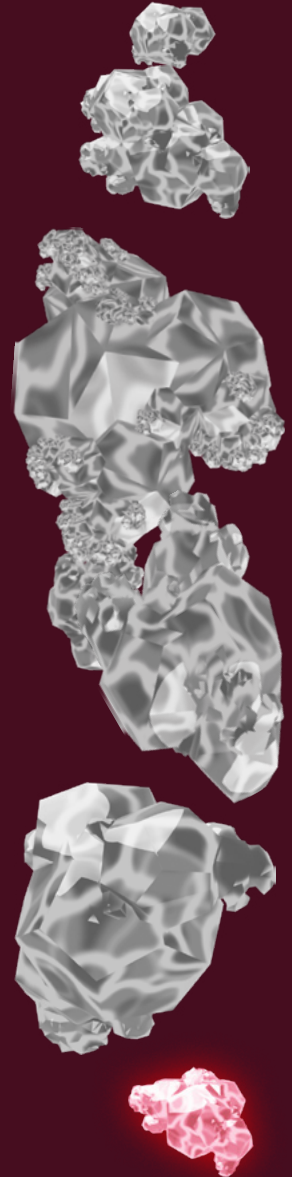


← for the German Short Film Prize for her work “From My Desert”. Androva has participated in numerous exhibitions at home and abroad, including at DISPLAY (Berlin), CyberArt 2021, Prix Ars Electronica Exhibition (Linz), Goethe Institute Sofia (BG), Galeria Espacio Mínimo (Madrid), Institute of Contemporary Art (Sofia) and Monitoring – Exhibition for Time-Based Media Art (Kassel DokFest).

Androva works in the field of experimental documentary film. She combines different sources, including archival and documentary material, with painting. She then connects them with the use of animations in virtual environments. In doing so, she examines social power constructs (like the relationship between art and gender or capitalism and love) and explores socio-political,

economic and gender issues. During her Prater Digital residency, Androva has continued her artistic research, creating a walkthrough narrative.

Veneta Androva staged a bright, laboratory-like space for Prater Digital, which is a vision of the future. Robots alter famous portraits of white men. Texts generated by GPT-3 are chanted, singing the praises of the men depicted. The title of the work refers to the ability to recognise repetition and patterns from a particular data set – in this case, the word ‘genius’, which repeatedly appears in connection with the personalities depicted. Androva questions the cult of male genius that is anchored in the databases of the world and that, as a result, is reflected in AI-generated texts. ✕



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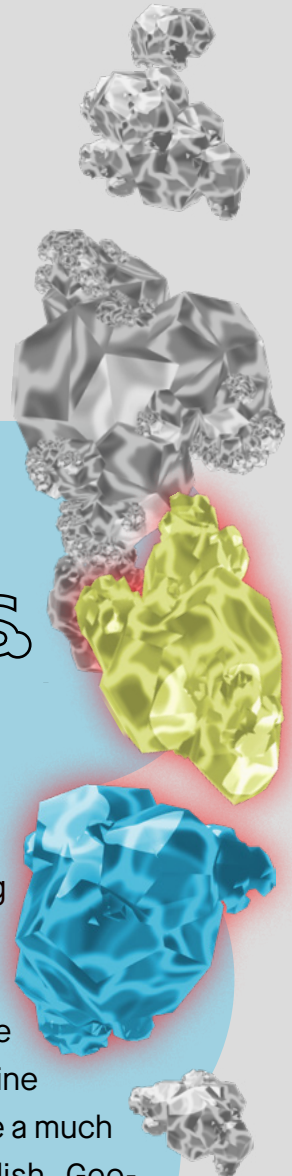


← None of the artists invited used the gallery as an exhibition space in the traditional sense. Instead, it was often only used at the evening meet-ups as a place to gather and from there, to transform into other spaces – the actual artworks. In the end, only Michelle-Marie Letelier explored the Prater Galerie model. She placed the gallery space at the centre of her work and examined the function and necessity of spatial models in virtual exhibitions by deconstructing them. As the original model of the gallery space was disbanded, an abstract, fluid environment⁷ emerged. The other artists built new spaces with Spoke, using pre-configured models or designing their own spaces. Sharon Paz and D'Andrade built spaces explicitly for their narratives. Both used voice recordings, providing the spaces with a temporal dimension. Whereas in the evening meet-ups visitors were moved through the spaces in a specific order, in the subsequent presentation links to the scenes existed side by side in an upstream space. In the case of Sharon Paz, the rooms served as a metaphor for the plot and relationship between the characters. →

⁷ The term environment dates back to the late 1950s, in reference to works of art that deal with the relationship between object and environment. We are applying this term to virtual 3D environments that can be built with the help of programmes like Mozilla Hubs.

Public relations

Compared to physical events and exhibitions, promoting online formats is especially effective in digital space. The important thing here is to lead the audience directly to the exhibition venue – that is, the link (whether in the form of a URL or as a QR code) is the gateway to an online exhibition. We should also note that online formats have a much wider reach, especially when content is also in English. Geographic distance is not an issue here. →



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← Veneta Androva created a mist-filled space, the dimensions of which were initially unclear to the audience. The space is revealed, not through a progressive narrative, but through the movement of the audience itself. In Juliane Tübke's work, the large room serves as a container that changes the scale and perception of her images.

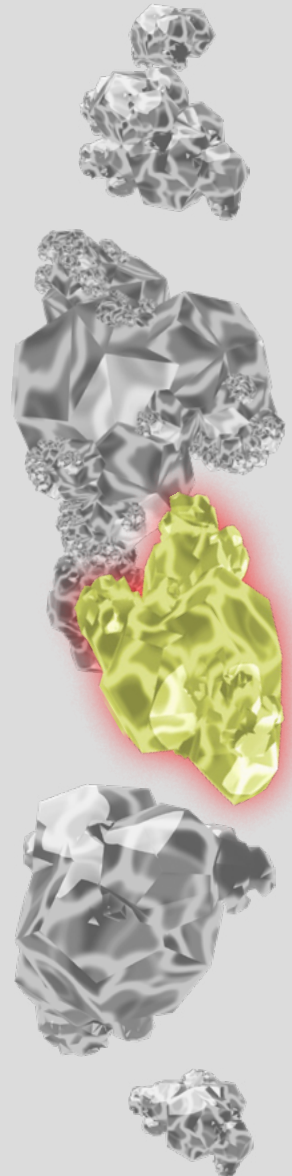
Mozilla Hubs imitates human movement in space and the representation of objects through the perspective of avatars. It even allows the viewer to fly, passing through objects in the space. Sharon Paz pre-set the flight simulator mode in her rooms. She asked visitors to switch to the avatar of a fly and move around the rooms in this way, landing on walls or the ceiling. Here, flying also represents the voyeuristic observation of intimate conversations between Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger. Juliane Tübke, on the other hand, arranged some of her works in such a way that they could only be viewed in detail when

flying. Michelle-Marie Letelier placed links behind mirrors in her rooms so that they would function as portals through which the viewer can enter new rooms. Mozilla Hubs makes it possible to break away from the limitations of the laws of physics and thus from our own bodies. This also changes our relationship with the artwork itself. We are no longer just facing a work of art, but the work of art becomes an environment. This is particularly palpable when using VR headsets.

Mozilla Hubs makes it possible to break away from the limitations of the laws of physics and thus from our own bodies.

Compared to the evening meet-ups, which took place ahead of the residencies, we found that conversations were more intuitive and productive when the work under discussion was in the room. Virtual space is particularly suited to work made specifically for that space; for other discussions, it

adds no (or little) value when compared to the usual video-conferencing formats. ✕



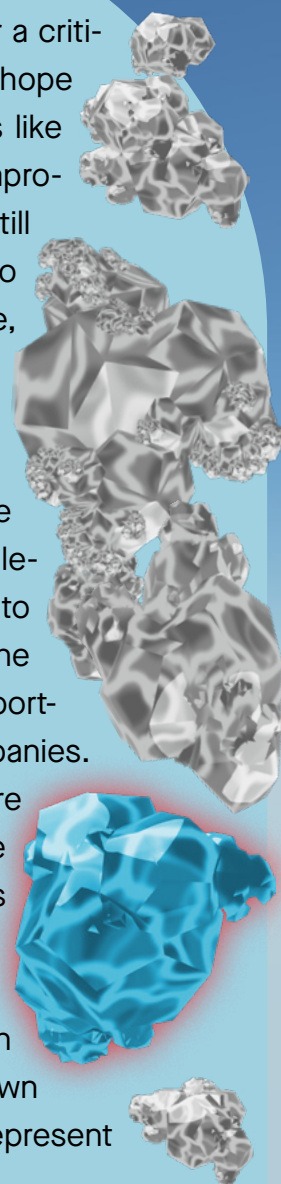


* This policy needs to be reassessed after the current developments on the platform. There is also the question of which platforms we, as a cultural institution, want to be active on and which platforms are likely to post content about us.

← In the pilot phase of Prater Digital, we aimed for a critical approach to major social media platforms. The hope was to be able to do without the Meta-run platforms like Facebook and Instagram, using only Twitter as a compromise.* But as a new institution, with our own PR list still not fully formed, our newsletter has a limited reach to date. After a targeted PR offensive in the pilot phase, we decided to relax the social media policy to reach a broader audience. In the interests of better communication, we opened Facebook and Instagram accounts as Prater Galerie and promoted our formats there. We also deactivated our Twitter account. On the Prater Galerie website, we continue to refrain from posting links to social media platforms. Our policy is only to post with the consent of the artists and the people shown. Most importantly, we refrain from paid advertising with these companies.

As with any gallery in a physical space, a core audience of regulars can also form around an online programme. Their needs can be served by newsletters and independent channels (like Telegram or Discord). But even in these cases, a base needs to be built up first. In addition, ‘walk-in audiences’ are an option on social media – people who discover the post in their own stream. These types of spontaneous approaches represent the greatest advantages of centralised platforms.

The use of social media platforms is a balancing act. On the one hand, we want to adhere to the data protection →

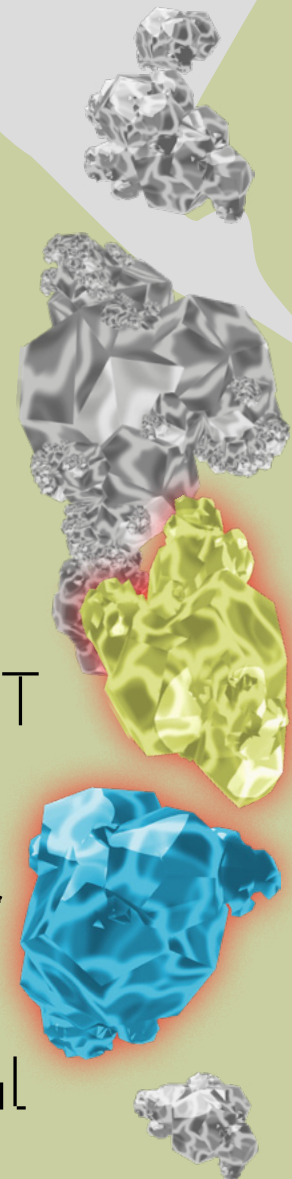


← rules set out in the GDPR and be as critical as possible when using the services of the Big Five companies.⁹ On the other hand, we want to reach as many people as possible with our digital offerings. Whatever the case, it always takes a certain amount of time to establish an account on any platform. We hope that new information channels will emerge in the future that not only draw attention to the classic physical exhibitions but also announce digital offerings as well. An exchange of experiences with other cultural actors offering online exhibitions and formats would be very desirable at this point. ✕

POST NORMAL

Digital exhibition

The digital exhibition POST NORMAL on Prater Digital includes works by the five artists who participated in the Prater Galerie's digital residency Programme. →

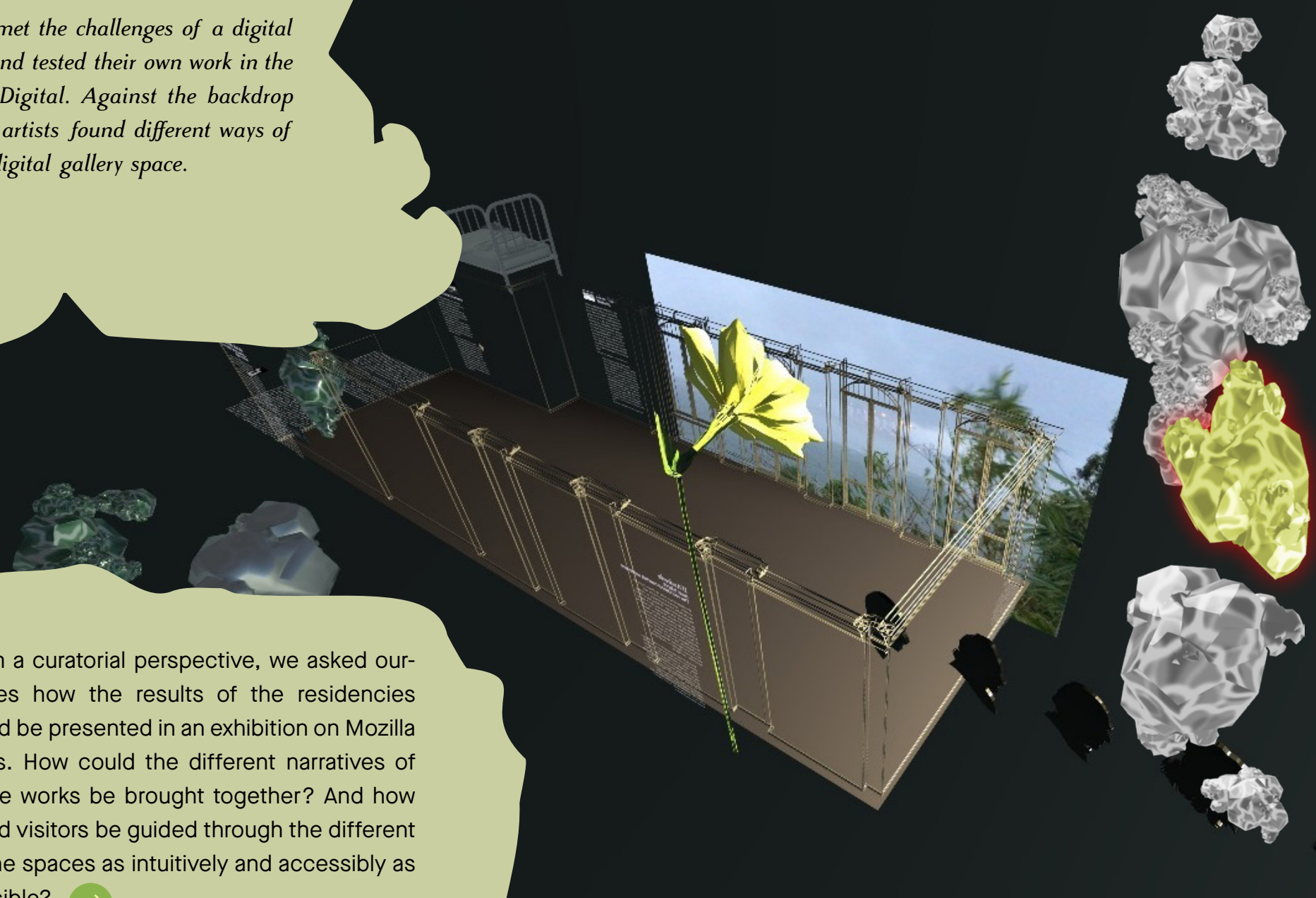


⁹Term for the five dominant tech companies in the information technology industry: Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Apple, Meta (Facebook) and Microsoft.



← *The artists met the challenges of a digital exhibition space and tested their own work in the rooms of Prater Digital. Against the backdrop of their work, the artists found different ways of dealing with the digital gallery space.*

From a curatorial perspective, we asked ourselves how the results of the residencies could be presented in an exhibition on Mozilla Hubs. How could the different narratives of these works be brought together? And how could visitors be guided through the different online spaces as intuitively and accessibly as possible? →



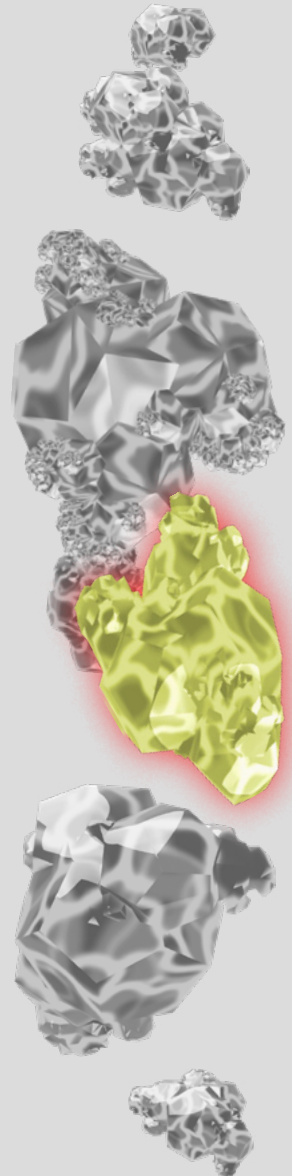
← Another question that arose during the residencies was why the concept of the gallery or physical space is one that we instinctively cling to, especially since the artists all created new spaces or environments. Despite this, we decided to keep the gallery space as the gateway to the exhibition. For one thing, it was the starting point of the residencies, and it has proven helpful to have an onboarding/arrival space that resembles a familiar physical environment, where visitors can get to know technical requirements in 'familiar surroundings'. Even so, the space was made abstract, leaving only the framework without walls or ceilings. The texts were arranged as in a classical exhibition, on the 'walls' next to the objects. In the gallery space, there was one object from each artist, taken from their individual rooms, that highlighted their work. These objects were placed around the gallery so that they could be seen as if through the walls. Next to the names of the

artists was a picture, behind which a link to the rooms could be found. The individual artistic positions were thus presented through the text, the reference object to the room, and the link in the virtual gallery space.

In the room sequence, the question arises as to how visitors return from the artists' rooms to the main room. When considering virtual spaces as digital environments, placing links is an intrusion into the artwork (akin to hanging an exit sign on an immersive installation in physical space). To avoid interfering with the artworks, we chose not to place links in these spaces. Some of the artists' rooms open in a separate browser tab. In this case, visitors can always return to the starting point. But not every

browser allows new tabs and windows to open automatically. This often has to be explicitly permitted, which is an additional hurdle. So, it has to be decided whether a link is placed in the artwork in the interests of improved navigation, or not. →

◆
Mozilla Hubs automatically generates a thumbnail image for a link. It is not possible to specify this image yourself or to use the name of the artists instead, for example.



PROGRAMME





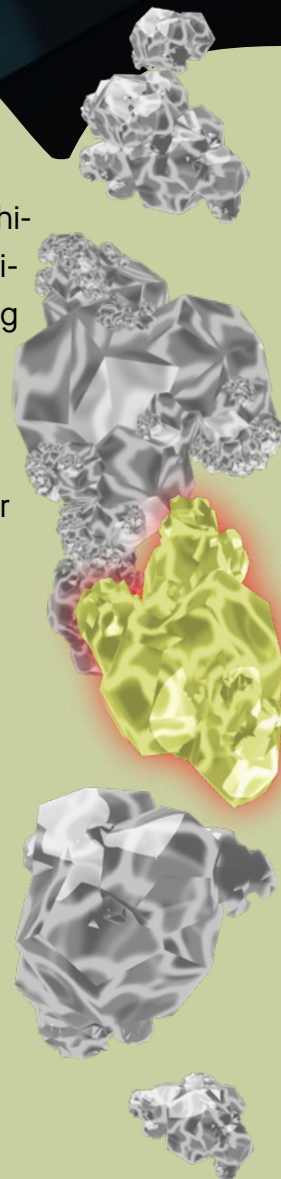
In Spoke, you can specify the 'spawn point' where visitors enter the room as avatars. It's advisable to allocate enough space so that the avatars don't overlap when entering and to ensure there is room to dodge other avatars while testing the controls.



A room is provided by the Mozilla Hubs team that explains how virtual rooms work and the way to use them. There is an option to adapt this room for exhibitions and foreground it as a separate room (like a foyer). Another idea is to make a video in which two avatars welcome the visitors, providing a technical introduction and telling visitors everything they need to know to orientate themselves. Whatever the case, an acoustic and visual introduction is a definite requirement to facilitate access for as many people as possible.



We had to find solutions in the exhibition as to how best introduce the visitors to the technical details without being present. To do this, we placed an audio clip at the entry point to the exhibition that greeted visitors and explained how to move around and where links to other rooms were located. ✕



PROGRAMME



Mediation

POST NORMAL

VR

We decided to show the POST NORMAL exhibition on our Oculus Quest VR headsets too. These had been acquired in 2020 during the pilot phase. It's important to mention that Oculus Quest belongs to Facebook / Meta. By using these devices, we are diverging from our own rules. There are other manufacturers of all-in VR headsets. By adjusting the headsets ourselves, we have done our best to restrict any infringement of rights and permissions that could result in the transmission of non-essential data to third parties.

As we know from other exhibitions, VR headsets can only be used by a limited number of visitors at any given time. In our case, we decided to set up time slots and a waiting list. We worked with three headsets in parallel, with two visitors at a time being guided through the exhibition in a group. In addition, we streamed the content from one headset onto a wall so that a larger audience could watch from outside. In outreach work with VR headsets, the challenge was to find a balance between technical and content-related art education. For most visitors, this was



Mozilla Hubs makes it easy to view VR space in VR glasses via the browser. Since most glasses behave like mobile devices, the browsers also look like mobile phones or tablets. Mozilla Hubs automatically reduces the display quality of the space so that it loads faster. But we wanted to display all the work in the highest quality possible. This can be circumvented by selecting 'high-quality mode' before entering the room. This can also be pre-set for visitors by adding a string to the Mozilla Hubs room link (e.g. at <https://hubs.mozilla.com/ND72C9r/prater-digital-post-normal>, you have to add "?default_mobile_material_quality=high".

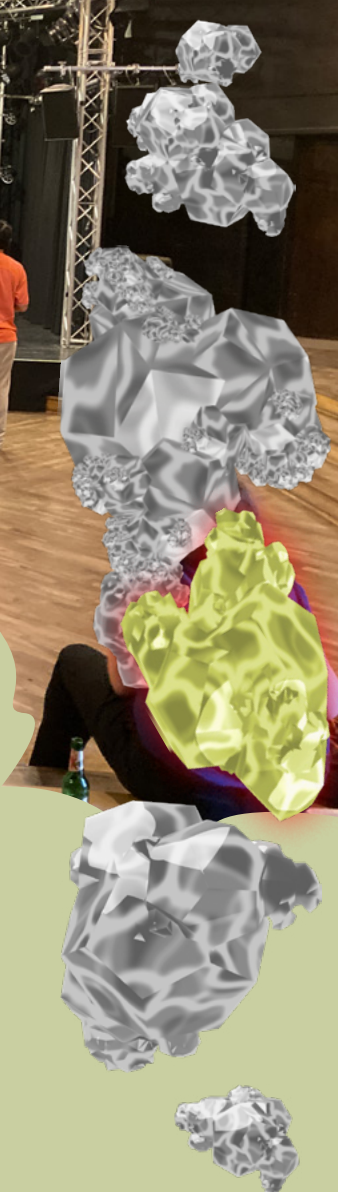


← their first immersive technology experience. So, we prepared an internal script which we used to introduce the visitors to the technology. One person oversaw tech support and stood close to the visitors. A second person was connected to the visitors via VR glasses and guided them through virtual space. We also developed an information sheet that provided a basic technical and content-related introduction. In addition to a description of the exhibition, there was an illustration of the controls with their respective functions. In addition, the info sheet provided visitors with an exhibition link so that they could visit it later online. We quickly found that younger people and children in particular were eager to try out the glasses for themselves and reacted very positively to the technology.

But for many visitors, viewing via streaming was stimulating enough. We received positive feedback across the different age groups on this. It should be noted that this technology is still not part of everyday life, and there is a great fascination for immersive virtual spaces, which sometimes means that the artworks receded slightly into the background. Although the VR training for our exhibition required high numbers of staff and much preparation, we could tell from participant feedback that it was worth it.



Meta's recommended age limit for their glasses is 13 and over.



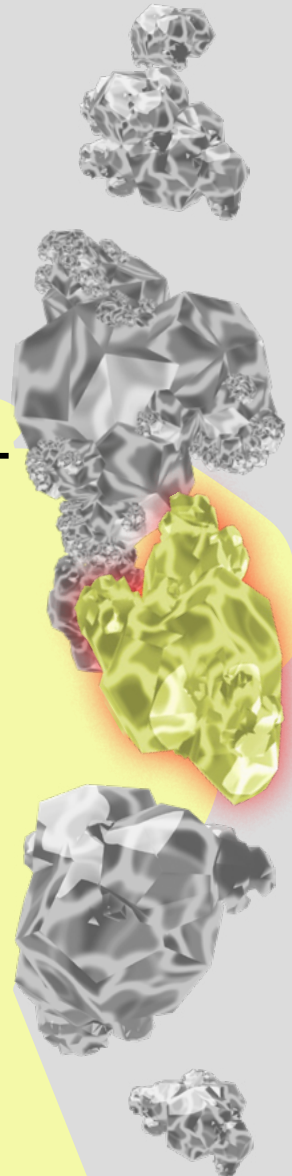
PROGRAMME



Democracy and Me

An art Pedagogy Project on critical media education and Political engagement

During the pandemic, art educator Zsófia Puszt worked for several months with young Hungarians on the topic of democracy and its significance in their lives. Starting with the question of where and how democracy is experienced in their daily lives, they examined images of democracy in the media.



PROGRAMME



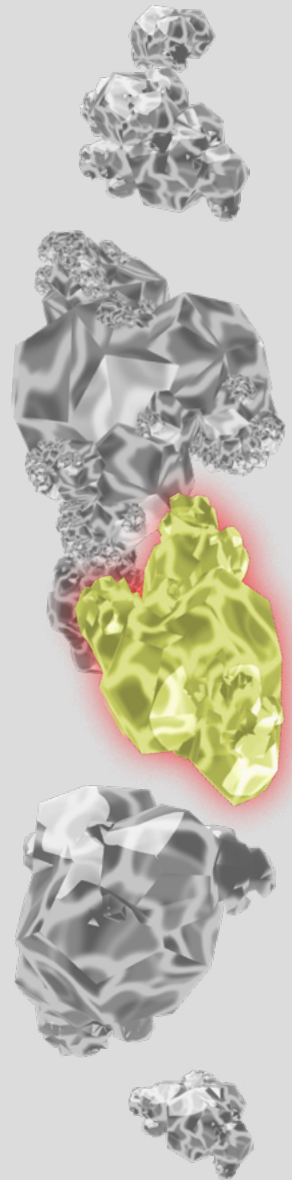
← Among other things, Puszt ran an online workshop and designed an exhibition in Prater Digital with young people from visual material they had collected. In the evening meet-up, Zsófia Puszt presented her work and talked about her experiences with digital art education as well as its role in the service of democracy in post-communist countries, using Hungary as a case study. →

The narrator and the reader figuratively and literally equally dictate the outcome despite the words remaining the same.

Narrative is complicated and messy.



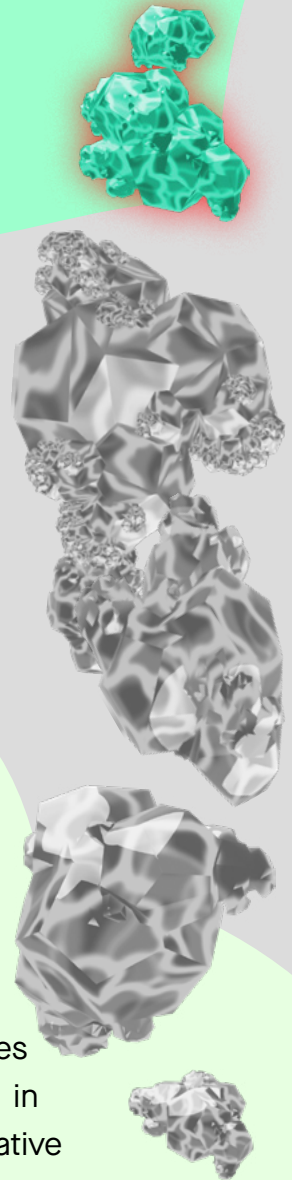
← The Democracy and Me project came at a time when many young people and children had already been attending online lessons for a while because of the pandemic. For her work with the students, Zsófia Puszt used different conference and collaboration platforms (Webex, Zoom, Miro and Messenger services). In several workshops in the Prater Digital gallery, the aim was to present the material collected in an exhibition. It was observed that the students quickly found other ways to communicate when they had problems with Mozilla Hubs. Some students were unable to connect their microphones to Mozilla Hubs and therefore could not talk, so they chatted in parallel via a messenger service. Other students were not connected to Mozilla Hubs via a computer, but their smartphones, which limited their ability to place and move objects. But again, they came up with creative solutions, with these students directing the others via audio. Very quickly, the students found that they could also change the space with architectural elements. They soon began to build, until the crowded room threatened to collapse. Then they tidied up and organised, making the room more spacious again. In another workshop with the same students, we observed that precise placement and presentation of materials became more and more important to the students after the initial experience. One of the students then used Spoke to build her own room for her topic. In the last workshop, students presented their results and methods, and guided guests through the exhibition. ✕



Conclusion and comparisons with Learnings #1

In the Pilot Phase,
the following goals
were formulated:

- ↳ to ensure high accessibility for organisers, artists and audience (i.e. easy handling for users/audience, institute staff and artists)
- ↳ renunciation of commercial software (to avoid contributing to shareholder wealth of companies like Google, Facebook and Amazon with our work and art)
- ↳ data protection integrity
- ↳ storage of application knowledge in many institutes (to help all users act in a self-determined way in the digital infrastructure and to promote collaborative exchange with colleagues) →



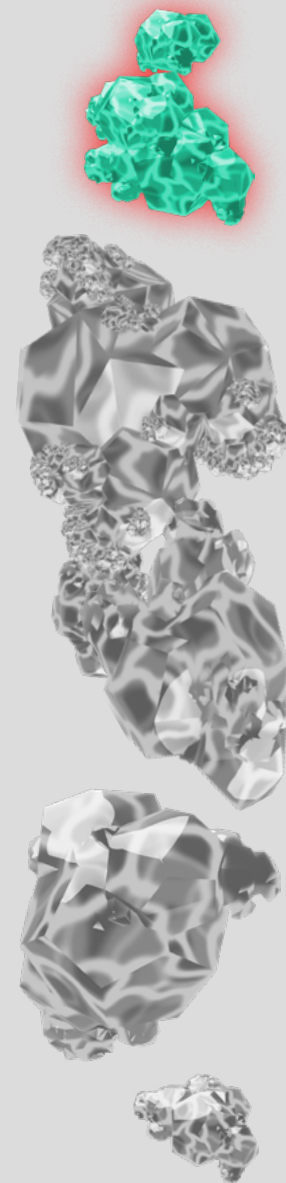
← With the option of participating in events without registration, Mozilla Hubs is easily accessible. But its use remains a hurdle for those with no experience of computer games.

Foregoing social media is very difficult when establishing a new institution – even if it is online – and presenting it to a wider audience beyond local boundaries. This is where the potential of an online gallery lies. For greater accessibility, the link to the exhibition must be freely available online. For an institution whose website is not highly frequented to date, this is a challenge. Rules decided upon in dealing with these platforms are another matter altogether.

During the second phase of Prater Digital, we made a huge effort to engage as many people as possible on Mozilla Hubs, using both computers and VR glasses. In most cases, it has sparked interest in the technology and caused people to think about its

creative potential. We continue to be open to all inquiries and are willing to advise and assist interested parties from other cultural institutes in developing Mozilla Hubs exhibitions and events. In addition, we aim to continue documenting and sharing our tips and tricks.

Third-party services and platforms evolve and update in rapid cycles – what worked last week may be completely different this week. So we can't emphasise enough the importance of testing any technical features in advance. Participants, presenters and artists need to be well informed, and a test run should always be scheduled if possible. In addition, it's always good to have a plan B in case something does not work as intended – for example, access to the content presented should be available to several organisers so that quick staff switches are possible. →



← Questions that remain unanswered:

- ↳ How do we work together digitally? In which accounts, where and how do we store access points?
- ↳ With whom and how will the work be stored after completion?
- ↳ How do we deal with the duration of exhibitions? What are the advantages and disadvantages of restricting exhibitions to a set length of time, or should we leave them permanently accessible? ✕



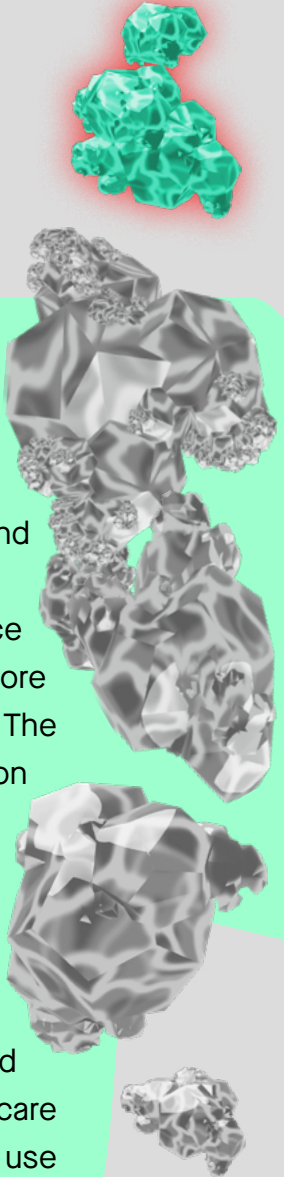
A new definition of Prater Digital

Prater Digital is an attempt to establish sustained engagement with both digital artistic practices, and digital exhibition and education techniques in a municipal gallery. 'Digital' is defined here as a cluster of different technologies that result when connecting a computer (whether in the form of a desktop, smartphone, XR devices, etc.) to a worldwide network – i.e. the Internet. Art and cultural practices linked to these technologies promise new ways of producing and presenting art, as well as social interaction and the reception of art.

Digital technologies are diverse, fluid and in a constant state of flux; they give rise to multiple aesthetics and practices. That is why Prater Digital does not limit itself to a specific technology, platform or scene but searches for cross-topic themes and processes that have a specific expression in these technologies or arise directly from

them, and which are of significance for culture and society beyond this.

Prater Digital was created as a standalone space within the municipal Prater Galerie and was opened before the completion of renovations to the physical gallery. The Prater Galerie, Prater Digital and Prater Cultural Education are interconnected yet independent entities. Exploring discursive topics of the present as well as addressing social interaction now and in the future are part of the gallery's self-image, which is reflected in all three departments. In both physical and digital space, the programme and our work processes should be carried out sustainably. We want to continue to maintain and care for the digital infrastructure so that it can truly remain of use in the long term. ✕



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