Kunstverein Bielefeld

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Symposium *Speculative Pen: Fabulating Institutional Futures*

Organized by Temporary Gallery. Centre for Contemporary Art in Cologne, Kunstverein Bielefeld, Kunstverein Siegen

Speculative Pen is an artistic symposium taking an experimental format that connects institutional self-questioning with speculative exercises regarding the desired future of art institutions. Rather than a conventional site of knowledge transmission, the event is conceived as a collective learning space and artistic-curatorial intervention in which institutional structures are reflected upon and speculatively extended. The title refers to the ballpoint pen as a tool of administrative and structural practice. By reinterpreting it as the 'speculative pen', we explore the extent to which speculative approaches can contribute to rethinking institutional structures and the associated scope for action. At the same time, we ask how utopian propositions can be translated into concrete, situated speculations that build on existing practices.

This symposium is an open research project undertaken by three institutions — the CCA Temporary Gallery in Cologne, the Kunstverein Bielefeld and the Kunstverein Siegen — as part of the *Übermorgen – Neue Modelle für Kulturinstitutionen* programme run by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes, which brings together fifty cultural institutions across Germany to develop new approaches to their future as meaningful spaces for social life, particularly in light of the significant challenges and crises of our time. Over eighteen months, the three institutions are jointly developing their working methods, testing new models of collaboration and participation, and pursuing the question of how art institutions can remain networked, equitable, and fit for the future. What connects them is a shared understanding of exhibition-making as something that extends into the urban and social fabric of their respective cities, and of discourse and education not as accompanying activities but as integral to curatorial practice itself.

One conceptual thread running through this research is the concept of the permacultural institution, developed by Aneta Rostkowska in her essay *Towards a Permacultural Institution* (Islands of Kinship, Mousse Publishing, 2024). Drawing on the principles of permaculture — long-term thinking, interdependence, and care for living systems — the model presents art institutions as accessible and inclusive hybrid spaces that combine the functions of community centres and exhibition spaces, and that prioritise the well-being of both their staff and the wider community. It advocates decentralising curatorial authority, integrating social engagement into the institution's core structure, and cultivating sustainable practices that run counter to the overproductive, fast-paced logic of the contemporary art world. Crucially, the model insists that ecological and social sustainability must always be thought together — neither can be addressed in isolation from the other. The concept has been developed through practice as well as theory: first through the summer seminar *Towards Perma-Cultural Institutions: Exercises in Collective Thinking* (Stiftung Künstlerdorf Schöppingen, 2022, see documentation here), and subsequently through the workshop series *Towards*

Permacultural Institutions: Curating Transformation (CCA Temporary Gallery, 2023, see documentation here), which brought permacultural ethics — earth care, people care, and fair share — to bear on questions of institutional transformation in the art sector.

Kunstvereine occupy a peculiar position in the cultural landscape: chronically underfunded yet stubbornly persistent, they have long functioned as what might be called 'survival artists' — nimble, community-rooted, and capable of experimenting precisely because they operate outside the logic of large institutional self-preservation. This symposium asks how that structural precarity might be reframed as a condition for solidarity, and how genuinely collaborative practices can be built within and across these structures. Through collective writing and creative self-expression sessions guided by artistic impulses, through fictional excursions, workshops (including Paulina Seyfried's *Language Creates Reality* on the third day), discussions and lectures, we will address questions of participation and publicness, alongside different organisational forms and possibilities for democratising institutional practice. The symposium also attends to social sustainability and process-oriented, collaborative educational work — one that considers inclusive access alongside decolonial and transcultural perspectives.

The event brings together an international group of artists, curators, researchers and institutional practitioners, including Cane Adina Erzi, Alistair Hudson (online), Nina Möntmann, Tamarind Rossetti and Stephen Wright, Paulina Seyfried, Meghna Singh, Kathy-Ann Tan, Fatoş Üstek (online) and Franciska Zólyom, among others. Food by AMA.TWI.

Convened by: Jennifer Cierlitza (Kunstverein Siegen), Lisa Klosterkötter and Aneta Rostkowska (CCA Temporary Gallery), and Victoria Tarak (Kunstverein Bielefeld).

The symposium will be live streamed. To register, please write to info@temporarygallery.org by 1 July. You can find information about the event's accessibility on Temporary Gallery´s website. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any special requirements or queries, or if you would like further information.

Language: English, with brief introductions to each contribution in accessible language in both German and English.

Funded by *Übermorgen – New Models for Cultural Institutions*, an initiative by the German Federal Cultural Foundation. It is delivered in collaboration with Bureau Ritter as the executive partner. The German Federal Cultural Foundation is funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.

Die Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Kunstvereine (ADKV) is a cooperation partner in the joint project.

Schedule:
Thursday 9. July, 9.30-20.00, including a dinner at the Temporary Gallery
Friday, 10. July, 9.30-20.00
Saturday, 11.July, 9.30-12.00 Workshop with Paulina Seyfried, afterwards 12-13 lunch

Venue: CCA Temporary Gallery, Cologne

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Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien