

Scans, Residues, Misrecognition and Other Materialities of Loss

Evan Pavka and Benjamin Busch

Purportedly, archives exist to counter disappearance and obsolescence. They are filled with records, photographs, and other documents functioning as evidence or testaments to the events of the past, which could otherwise fade into the abyss of personal and cultural memory if not preserved.¹ Yet, such privileges and subsequent agency over interpretation are not always extended to all.² For many communities, particularly queer individuals and their intersections with various marginalized identities, there are glaring absences in public, institutional, and private record-keeping that reveal gaps and holes in collective consciousness.³ Since 2021, Berlin-based artist and architect Benjamin Busch has documented the architectural environments

¹ Louise Craven, "From the Archivist's Cardigan to the Very Dead Sheep: What are Archives? What are Archivists? What do They Do?" in *What are Archives? Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: A Reader*, ed. Louise Craven (London: Ashgate, 2008), 7-13.

² See Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," *Diacritics* 2 (1995): 9-63, 9-11; Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (1986): 3-64, 55-58; Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (2004): 3-22, 3-6.

³ See Syrus Marcus Ware, "All Power to All People?: Black LGBTTI2QQ Activism, Remembrance, and Archiving in Toronto," *TSQ* 4, no. 2 (2017): 170-180, 171.

leveraged by the queer inhabitants of the German metropolis as a contribution to a larger cultural preservation initiative. With a Leica BLK360 laser scanner and tablet, Busch has traversed the many public, semi-public, and private spaces that define the city's distinct queer archipelago, turning islands of interiors into exacting scaled three-dimensional models that, in "perverse detail," relay spatial configurations, materials, ornamentation, furnishings, decor, and more. Of the over 30 sites documented in *Scanning the Horizon* (2022-2024), a selection exists as an accessible digital platform (queerspaces.berlin) and as a parallel interactive virtual reality artwork, at present enabling viewers to move through nearly a dozen of the recorded structures.⁴ The subsequent scans are presented in their earnest digital aesthetic — navigable environments comprised of glowing clouds of data points recalling flickering neon lights in a nocturnal cityscape — as if constantly pictured at night when limits, borders, and systems of surveillance dissolve to enable other ways of being to emerge. The arrays of spatial points forming the virtual locations are further contextualized with oral histories drawn from interviews with the owners or occupants, "warm data" that maps affective experiences into and onto the sites.⁵ As Busch identifies in this conversation, the corresponding "archival gesture" is equally essential. It's an openly subjective, imperfect, and malleable collection that "does not claim to be complete," but nonetheless centers queer voices, experiences, logics of memorializing, and emerging techniques of preserving unstable heritage.⁶ At a time when subcultural spaces are shuttering due to inflation, hostile rental markets, encroaching development, and other economic pressures that make operation in many major urban areas increasingly untenable, coupled with rising violence and right-wing extremism intent on erasure and eradication, the performative scans act as a tangible precaution against a looming sense of loss.⁷ In the artist's hands, these ephemeral "residues of lived experience" are

⁴ The cumulative project *Scanning the Horizon* exists as two parallel components: a website (*Scanning the Horizon: Queer Spaces Berlin*, 2021–2024) and a Virtual Reality installation (*Scanning the Horizon: An Immersive Archive*, 2022–2024).

⁵ Mariam Ghani, "Divining the Question: An Unscientific Methodology for the Collection of Warm Data," *Viralnet*, 2006, http://www.integr8dmedia.net/viralnet/2006/2006_ghani.html. Rather than "hard factual information typical of legal and bureaucratic systems with the unquantifiable aspects of human life," warm data is the intense, affective relations both "unique and highly individual" that give such objective information its social and cultural meaning.

⁶ Benjamin Busch, "Info," *Scanning the Horizon*, <https://queerspaces.berlin/>.

⁷ Peter Knegt, "Long live The Beaver: A celebration of Toronto's most beloved queer space," *CBC*, July 15, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/arts/long-live-the-beaver-a-celebration-of-toronto-s-most-beloved-queer-space-1.5649212>. By no means a comprehensive account, the following instances reveal the slow erasure of queer establishments from numerous cities in tandem with increasing acts of extremist violence. In July 2020, Toronto bar The Beaver ceased operations due to reports of COVID-19-related

both monuments to the present moment and glimpses into potential futures, anticipating — like queerness itself — a use, meaning, and actualization on some horizon, some distant reality, or some place that is not quite here yet.⁸

Evan Pavka: “Queer” and “space” are two obvious yet contested terms when considering sexuality and the built environment. How are you thinking about these slippery definitions and approaches within the context of *Scanning the Horizon* and the sites that feature in it?

Benjamin Busch: For me, the theory of space elaborated by philosopher Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* was very formative.⁹ In the book, he describes it as a three-part continuous movement of the lived space, representations of space and the spatial imaginary (or representational spaces) where utopian ideas and practices arise. I am also fascinated with the idea of architecture as a sensor, which has been written about by Eyal Weizman in the framework of Forensic Architecture.¹⁰ I am interested in thinking about a space as something more than just a planning document — about a

pressures. It was later announced that the block on which it is located would be redeveloped by Streetcar Developments and Dream Unlimited; “Barbie Deinhoff’s schließt,” *Siegessäule* April 20, 2021, <https://www.siegessaule.de/magazin/barbie-deinhoffs-schließt/>. As a result of pandemic-related hardships, the cult queer bar Barbie Dienhoff in Berlin ceased operation in spring 2021; Charles E. Ramirez and Mark Hicks, “Crews battle fire at Woodward Bar & Grill in New Center area,” *Detroit News*, June 14, 2022, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2022/06/14/crews-battle-fire-building-woodward-new-center-area/7622681001/>. On June 14, 2022, Detroit’s oldest gay bar, The Woodward, burned down from unknown causes; “Detective: Colorado Springs Club Shooter Ran Neo-Nazi Site,” *Associated Press*, February 22, 2023, <https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2023-02-22/colorado-gay-club-shooting-no-mystery-but-motive-unknown>; “Harrowing Video Shows Group Holding Flags With Swastikas During Protest at Drag Brunch in Ohio,” *NBC Chicago*, May 1, 2023, <https://www.nbcchicago.com/top-videos-home/group-holding-flags-with-swastikas-during-protest-at-drag-brunch-in-ohio/3131147/>. More recent and concerning reporting has revealed that right-wing and neo-Nazi extremists have targeted queer establishments and events, resulting in a number of deaths in the case of the Club Q shooting in Colorado Springs in December 2022, and threats of violence by armed protesters at a May 2023 Drag Brunch in Columbus, Ohio.

⁸ José Esteban Muñoz, “Introduction: Feeling Utopia,” in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1. “Queerness is not here yet,” José Esteban Muñoz argues. “We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness’s domain.”

⁹ See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991).

¹⁰ Eyal Weizman, “Introduction: Forensis,” in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (London: Sternberg Press, 2014), 9-32.

building as a witness and space as continually produced and negotiated among a myriad of actors.

The word “queer,” in a similar sense, is very open and process-based. It is a container, a vessel that people will fill with meanings that suit them. Richard Stein, operator of Südblock and one of the initiators of the early queer parties at SO36 in Berlin (fig.1), sees the term as an “unpretentious umbrella” people can stand under.¹¹ I would insist that queerness has to do with 2SLGBTQQAA+ identity and experiences, but what I appreciate about the term is that it can be approached by many different communities.¹² That includes the white gay cis male communities of Berlin who often take prominence in queer histories but also the lesbian, trans*, people of color, disabled, and further intersectional queer communities. Thinking about “queer” as a vessel or organizing term for the project has allowed me to place focus on spaces that break with a definition of queer environments as competitive or hierarchized. Rather, it allows queer spaces to be seen as containing the residue of lived experience. Within



Figure 1: Benjamin Busch, *Scanning the Horizon: An Immersive Archive*, 2022-2024. Detail of SO36 sign. Photo by Benjamin Busch. Courtesy of the artist, Benjamin Busch ©.

¹¹ Benjamin Busch, “SO36 x Gayhane,” *Scanning the Horizon*, <https://queerspaces.berlin/so36>.

¹² Two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, queer, questioning, and asexual, and more identities that fall under the more commonly used umbrella term “queer.” For brevity, this interview uses the term “queer” to signal these manifold and shifting identities.

the spaces I visited — particularly the self-organized spaces and the collective spaces like Begine, Sonntags-Club, (fig.2-3) and SO36 (fig.4) — there is a sense of solidarity that extends from the organizational structure itself into the communities that it interfaces with. In my experience, this contradicts a binary critique of what a “queer space” is or what it does, as well as who its community or communities may be.

There is also a question around the ability to be archived or published that was crucial throughout the process of creating the website and the virtual reality (VR) work. For them to remain safe, some spaces must stay private so that not everyone can have access. Simply creating a 3D scan could be considered an act of violence that compromises both autonomy and safety for certain spaces. An example might be a squat or another legally blurred territory. This also included places frequented by communities that have been historically oppressed and could face xenophobic aggression. Where it makes sense to archive and to publish are places where there is, and has been, an existing degree of publicness. All of the spaces on the website are open to the public; technically you can just walk in. You might be questioned or denied entry, as some of the spaces I’ve scanned are gender-exclusive, but these all remain accessible in ways that more private or informal sites are not. One of the questions I was asking myself about the locations and in the interviews was: What kind of protocols are in place? Indeed, the strictness of the protocol — the door protocol — plays a definitive role in the quality of the space and its accessibility, whether physical or virtual. This already creates a filter of which places can be involved in the project.



Figure 2: Benjamin Busch, *Scanning the Horizon: An Immersive Archive*, 2022-2024. Exterior of Sonntags-Club. Photo by Benjamin Busch. Courtesy of the artist, Benjamin Busch ©.



Figure 3: Benjamin Busch, *Scanning the Horizon: An Immersive Archive*, 2022-2024. Interior of Sonntags-Club. Photo by Benjamin Busch. Courtesy of the artist, Benjamin Busch ©.

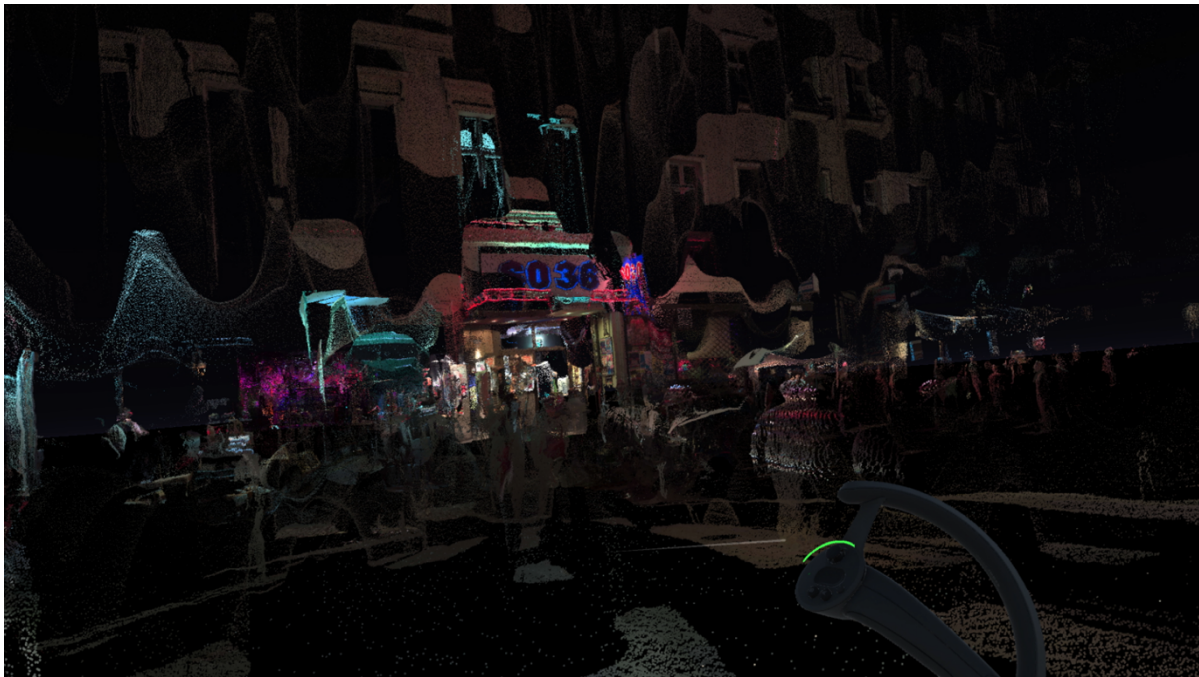


Figure 4: Benjamin Busch, *Scanning the Horizon: An Immersive Archive*, 2022-2024. Exterior of SO36. Photo by Benjamin Busch. Courtesy of the artist, Benjamin Busch ©.

EP: Your work appropriates LiDAR scanning, commonly used to create accurate, scaled and high-quality three-dimensional models of objects and architectural environments. Instead, you turn the camera toward seemingly innocuous subcultural places. This ongoing documentary project borrows its moniker from the writings of theorist José Esteban Muñoz, specifically his 2009 book, *Cruising Utopia*. But, for theorists like John Paul Ricco, cruising is practice of anonymous and uncertain, but nonetheless erotic, means of sociality involving “ungrounded movement” that generates a “groundless ground” or spatiality that is “at once no where and nowhere.”¹³ By leveraging a technology of symbolic vision that responds to subtle surface cues, gestures, depth, light and shadow, does scanning, for you, become a form of cruising architecture?

BB: It definitely has to do with voyeurism, which of course plays some part in cruising, if only because there is such a perverse amount of detail in the scans. The technology plays an important part, but the person doing the scanning plays the main role. Scanning could be a form of cruising but, in fact, this process of doing the 3D scans is more of a performance that brought me to many cruising places for the first time, such as the darkrooms¹⁴ of Ficken 3000, New Action, and Scheune. Not so much as a participant but as a voyeur — not of the bodies, but of the space and its attendant devices, textures, and residues. In some way, I also cruised spaces that have very little to do with overt sex. Through my research into existing infrastructure in Berlin, I cruised the city's oldest queer bookstore, Prinz Eisenherz, the café of its first women's only squat, Begine, and several public monuments.¹⁵ I also became more familiar with many of the spaces I had already visited through the process of scanning, which often involved long conversations with the operators, as well as the process of negotiating the completed files or following up in the cases where I did an interview.

EP: As we pan around the various spaces, we float, move through walls — even momentarily inhabit them — and trespass areas or terrains we may never have conventional access to too. Are these queer tactics or approaches?

¹³ John Paul Ricco, “Minor,” in *The Logic of the Lure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 9.

¹⁴ As the name suggests, darkrooms are spaces with little to no lighting typically located in the back of nightclubs, bars, or bathhouses to provide patrons space to engage in discrete, anonymous sexual activity.

¹⁵ These monuments include the Memorial to the First Homosexual Emancipatory Movement, the Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted Under Nazism, the “Rosa Winkel” commemorative plaque at Nollendorfplatz, and the Memorial to Magnus Hirschfeld and his Institute for Sexual Science in Tiergarten.

BB: One thing that the website does as an online public artwork is to grant access not to the spaces themselves but representations of those spaces that one might not normally experience, particularly as someone who does not identify as queer. This does not simply mean physical access in the “real” world, but how the nature of the 3D scans offers impossible perspectives of seeing a building inside out, views that are physically impossible to occupy otherwise. Perhaps inhabiting this position as a viewer allows for a queer reading of space, as you can literally engage the structures from above or beside and even see interior walls becoming a penetrable surface of points. I've thought about this in relation to dissociation and depersonalization/derealization, which are experiences that may be more common in the queer community around discrimination and gender dysphoria.¹⁶ Medically speaking, depersonalization/derealization disorder is characterized by persistent experiences of detachment from one's body or surroundings.¹⁷ There is a quality of derealization to the 3D scans in that “normal” spatial perception is disrupted by the unreality of the inverted three-dimensional gaze — looking at a room inside-out. I believe dissociation relates quite well to experiences of the digital, virtual environments and my personal experience looking at the 3D scans on my desktop. And the fact that bodies are missing from the scans due to technological limitations heightens a sense of depersonalization, even to the point of a psychedelic experience.¹⁸

EP: The scans are also embedded with glitches, small gaps, or fractures. At times, partial figures are apparent on the street, doors impede the scanning of a wall surface, and occasionally the tripod and laser device appear as a haunting absence among the clustered points. Partial fragments of surrounding buildings are also frequently included, and clarity (or lack thereof) is often defined by the website

¹⁶ See Maxi Wallenhorst, “Like a Real Veil, Like a Bad Analogy: Dissociative Style and Trans Aesthetics,” *e-flux journal*, April 2021, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/117/385637/like-a-real-veil-like-a-bad-analogy-dissociative-style-and-trans-aesthetics/>; Leah Keating and Robert T. Muller, “LGBTQ+ Based Discrimination is Associated with PTSD Symptoms, Dissociation, Emotion Disregulation, and Attachment Insecurity Among LGBTQ+ Adults Who Have Experienced Trauma,” *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* 21, no.1 (2020): 124-141; Marco Colizzi, Rosalia Costa and Orlando Todarello, “Dissociative Symptoms in Individuals with Gender Dysphoria: Is the Elevated Prevalence Real?,” *Psychiatry Research* 226, no.1 (2015): 173-180.

¹⁷ Depersonalization/derealization is among the dissociative disorders that disrupt the normal integration of consciousness, identity, and perception. American Psychiatric Association, “Dissociative Disorders (Introduction),” in *DSM-5-TR* (Washington: American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2022), 329.

¹⁸ See Peter Rehberg, “A Psychedelic Double,” in *BPA// Exhibition 2022*, BPA// Berlin program for artists, eds. (Berlin: KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 2022), 1-2.



Figure 5: Benjamin Busch, *Scanning the Horizon: An Immersive Archive*, 2022-2024. Interior of Ficken 3000. Photo by Benjamin Busch. Courtesy of the artist, Benjamin Busch ©.

buffering — almost in a state of constant becoming. Could it be said that such digital mistakes are a means of “failing to be proper,” further queering the supposed objectivity of the technology?¹⁹

BB: It became very clear to me at an early point in the process that I would have to embrace the glitch because it's a constraint, but also a redeeming feature, of the technology — it is always going to have some digital noise or artifacts or failures (fig.5). Each complete scan is composed of several individual scans taken at various positions in the space. They are later connected in the Leica companion software and finally post-processed to remove extreme statistical outliers in CloudCompare. One scan takes about five minutes to complete, so it's nearly impossible to capture anything moving with fidelity. The partial figures you see are passers-by who happened to get caught. This also has to do with the optical technology itself, in that sometimes it misrecognizes even non-moving things. For instance, the LiDAR scanner perceives objects in a mirror to be real, physical objects in what I could only call the “mirror

¹⁹ Sara Ahmed, “Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology,” *GLQ* 12, no.4 (2006): 543; See also Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

world,” as it struggles with reflective surfaces of any kind. When it shoots a laser at the disco ball, it doesn’t see the disco ball as much as it sees what it reflects (fig.6). Shiny and slippery surfaces have a digital fuzz or dust surrounding them. There is a materiality of loss and a misrecognition of, or by, the spatial capture technology.²⁰

EP: Is this loss or lack of fidelity ever an issue?

BB: It brings up an interesting critique of the technology: Is it capable of reflection? In my experience, the spaces that facilitated the strongest and most visually intriguing scans were ones that had a lot of reflective surfaces due to this misrecognition.

EP: Notions of misrecognition, passing, dissociation, and imperceptibility seem to return again and again in describing queer, trans*, and gender-divergent engagements with the world, the nature of digital interfaces, and the limitations of scanning technology. Are these affects and aesthetics foundational to conveying queer spatial experiences?

BB: Queerness is elusive and so are queer spaces. In a sense, all non-normative spaces elude the codes of hegemonic society, and therefore remain illegible to some extent. I

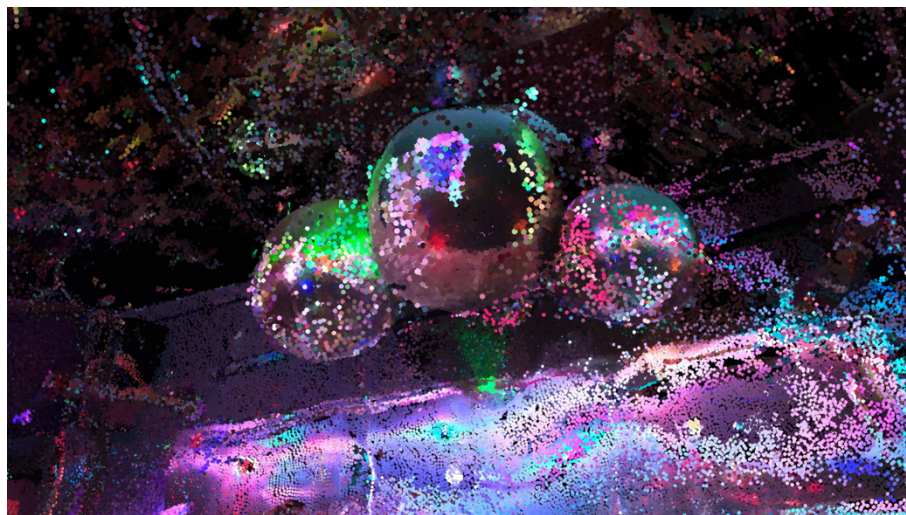


Figure 6: Benjamin Busch, *Scanning the Horizon: An Immersive Archive*, 2022-2024. Digital fuzz surrounding a disco ball in Ficken 3000. Photo by Benjamin Busch. Courtesy of the artist, Benjamin Busch ©.

think there is a connection between these concepts as they relate to queer lived experience, as well as to digital interfaces and scanning, in the way I have chosen to present the material aesthetically. The critique lies in my ongoing scrutiny of all forms and technologies of

²⁰ Linda Zhang and Biko Mandela Gray, “Beta-Real: The Materiality of Loss,” in *107th ACSA Annual Meeting Proceedings: Black Box, Pittsburg, 2019* (Washington: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2019), 628-629.

spatial representation, which usually serve the goals of planners, developers, and normative society at large. Rather than processing the scans into a Pixaresque, hyperreal spectacle, I chose to stay with the “lossiness” of the scans as a refusal of total representation, to use the point clouds as a form of aesthetic encryption. I wanted to make this inherent incompleteness a defining characteristic of the work, both as criticism and as a way to convey a queer reading of space. The VR work accelerates the dissociative aspect inherent to the medium, but also to the point cloud scans themselves. Disembodied voices tell stories about the spaces, which are themselves emptied of bodies, while immersive field recordings, or “sound pools,” created by artist Sarah Martinus, immerse the viewer in a digital shadow world that is not fully real, not fully virtual, but “para-real.”²¹ There is a further destabilizing visual effect applied to the point clouds in the VR work, programmed by my technical director Vladimir Storm, that makes the digital coordinates appear as if they are suspended in water or slightly waving in the wind. No matter how the viewer identifies, queer or not, their closeness to the space is limited by the fact they are interfacing it as a representation through a computer strapped to their face. I wanted to make this apparent. But if you have been to the site, you can fill in the gaps between the points with your memories. Everyone populates the virtual space in their imagination based on their own experiences.

EP: “Queerness is often transmitted covertly,” Muñoz argued in the essay “Ephemerality as Evidence.” As he continues, “This has everything to do with the fact that leaving too much of a trace has often meant that the queer subject has left [themselves] open for attack.”²² Do you consider architectural residue as part of this ephemera with the ability to function as “invisible evidence” of queer life?²³ Does this suggest that queer communities, people, and the spaces they move through require something beyond an archive?

BB: Though I situate this work both as an archive and as a publication, I do not know how much of the critique of the archive itself is intentionally embedded in the project. Rather, it is the insistence that there is a deficit of archival materials relating to queer history and that the project exists as a contribution to a growing collective archive.

²¹ Cade Diehm, “The Para-Real Manifesto,” *The New Design Congress*, December 9, 2022, <https://newdesigncongress.org/en/pub/the-para-real-manifesto>. According to Diehm, the “para-real” is “an emotional and transformative state that emerges when the electronic and the real collide.”

²² José Esteban Muñoz, “Ephemerality as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts,” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8, no.2 (1996): 6.

²³ Muñoz, “Ephemerality as Evidence,” 6.

When we think about queer spaces from the past or when we go to archives to put together an image or a concept of those spaces, we are often confronted with a glaring absence of materials. We may have photographs, video, or films and maybe even floor plans, but we rarely have a three-dimensional representation of the space. Beyond questions of queer archiving, the work that I am doing is also questioning the archive itself as a repository for information about space. In a way, it is speculating on the utility of this type of material for the future. At present, there is a mediating function of the website that is making the material visible. I see the website and the VR work existing as an activation or mediation of the archive. But, I am equally interested to see what functional use it could have in the future for telling stories and histories about today. There's a recursive thought process — going back and forth between this speculative future of storytelling and the present reality of managing these massive data files or sets and finding a way to aestheticize them so that people can understand and begin to think about further uses. And, to perceive their potential importance. Another layer of this is spaces that can be archived or safely documented through this approach. Some may be willing, but not yet ready to be published; there could be an interest in keeping this spatial material for future use though it does not currently make sense to make it so visible.



Figure 7: Benjamin Busch, *Scanning the Horizon: An Immersive Archive*, 2022-2024. Entry to the darkroom of Ficken 3000. Photo by Benjamin Busch. Courtesy of the artist, Benjamin Busch ©.

EP: Have you documented places that you are not comfortable disseminating?

BB: I have completed a number of scans in darkrooms that I was welcomed into. I was trusted to create these scans and, until today, I have chosen not to publish them. There is a single exception, Ficken 3000, as by now it is known much more as a scene bar or even a hipster bar (fig.7). While there is a darkroom in the basement, it is also frequently used as a place to hang out, where the music is playing, and where you can dance. It is not a secret. Discussing making it available online with the owners, combined with their existing media presence, gave me permission in some sense to make this public in a way that I had not established for the other darkroom bars.²⁴

EP: Ultimately, *Scanning the Horizon* is a fragile, ephemeral archive; files can be corrupted, physical storage can be compromised and software can advance to the point that VR is no longer operational. Like the spaces recorded, it is also the subject of entropy, loss, and potential erasure. How are you working with these limitations?

BB: I appreciate the value of ephemerality and orality as strategic practices against persecution. But Berlin is quite unique in that it is possible to be very transparent about queer life. It is actively supported by state institutions, providing grants, exposure, and representation and so on. Of course, there is always a risk in writing down oral histories and recording acts on durable media, especially with the internet becoming difficult to erase as a precautionary measure if things start to turn toward the right. But there is a risk here, as there is anywhere, that these documents, recordings, or scans can eventually become tools of oppression. The question is: What kind of society has to exist for that radical turn to take place? What conditions would make that possible? Censorship and proactive self-censorship are hallmarks of political oppression, and these practices were present in Germany in the lead-up to, and finally under, National Socialism. There is a vivid memory of that history here.

When I talk about the archive, which includes about 25 interior spaces as well as a handful of public monuments, the collection consists essentially of the 3D scans which have been exported into an open format (E57). I'm in the process of archiving them on Millennial Disc, a form of optical media widely used in archival practices. There is a hope that by using a specific format and a specific medium, the 3D scans will

²⁴ For instance, see "Die Erben der Darkrooms: Frank Müller vom Ficken3000 im Gespräch mit Aron Boks - taz Talk," Youtube, posted July 27, 2021, 56:42, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPuRrq5MbGs>.

still be accessible far into the future. But, who knows? One thing that is certain is that until these materials and this archive find another home, it is going to remain in my private custodianship. I have somehow created a job for myself to protect and oversee this material.

EP: To avoid erasure, you have become the reluctant arbiter or “archon” of your own archive.²⁵

BB: In a sense, you could also say this is a continuation of the performance of the archival gesture in perpetuum. Ultimately, I consider the scans, as well as the oral histories that I have recorded in interviews, as being snapshots of a moment in time. As opposed to only thinking about the files as potential remains or a remainder of a space, it might allow us to anticipate future snapshots, or future performances, or future parties, or whatever it might be that will happen within these places (fig.8). As someone who studied architecture and worked as an architect, I am aware there is a sort of impending demise to every space, to every structure. Maybe it's not within our



Figure 8: Benjamin Busch, *Scanning the Horizon: An Immersive Archive*, 2022-2024. Entry corridor in SO36. Photo by Benjamin Busch. Courtesy of the artist, Benjamin Busch ©.

²⁵ Derrida, “Archive Fever,” 9-11.

lifetimes, but that is just how it is. I like to think that there could be a remainder here that has some value in the future.

EP: Perhaps it is fitting to end by returning to Muñoz. For the author, the only hope for queer futurity is a wild leap into the void. It is only here that “another mode of being that is not yet here” can be glimpsed specifically through conjuring the abyss that consumes it.²⁶ In the end, is the embrace of disappearance — of spaces, archives, scans, bodies, and more — the queerest thing of all?

BB: With the exception of outdoor spaces or the street context, there are generally no bodies in the interiors of the scans. Therefore, there is already a sense of disappearance and refusal here partially determined by the technology, but also by my personal choice not to include people. One of the discussions in *Cruising Utopia* that I found particularly inspiring was the description of Kevin McCarty's *The Chameleon Club*, where the artist photographed empty stages in many queer and DIY venues.²⁷ What I appreciated about Muñoz's reading of McCarty's work is the active role of the



Figure 9: Benjamin Busch, *Scanning the Horizon: An Immersive Archive*, 2022-2024. Dance floor and stage of SO36. Photo by Benjamin Busch. Courtesy of the artist, Benjamin Busch ©.

²⁶ Muñoz, “A Jeté Out the Window: Fred Herko’s Incandescent Illumination,” in *Cruising Utopia*, 147.

²⁷ Muñoz, “A Jeté Out the Window,” 97-113; see also José Esteban Muñoz, “Impossible Spaces: Kevin McCarty’s *The Chameleon Club*,” *GLQ* 11, no. 3 (2005): 427-436.

spectator. It gives me the sense that a queer space isn't bound by walls, but maybe more of a space of recollection, one that's continually revisited and reconfigured on an imaginative, even neurological level every time we access our memories.²⁸ Queer spaces can be relived and even lived-in through this documentation in the same manner as looking at the empty stages of McCarty, projecting a performer one remembers on that stage or who one could imagine being in that venue (fig.9). With the softness of memory, orality, and oral traditions, there is social material that is unable to be documented; it can only be experienced and perceived. This is what I want to activate: to invigorate such processes of remembering as a way to not lose access to these spaces as a community, as communities, and as a society.

²⁸ Daniel L. Schacter, Donna Rose Addis, and Randy L. Buckner, "Remembering the Past to Imagine the Future: The Prospective Brain," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* vol. 8 (2007): 657-661.

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