

1990s Berlin was one of the centres of net art. In the new spaces of possibility of the reunited city, the first net art activities, i.e., works of net art, were techno(logical) and artistic experiments that grew out of the proximity of club and lab, in terms of both protagonists and locations. Inspired by what was then the subcultural movement of techno, artists formed collectives that saw in the net a medium in which the utopias and dystopias of the transition into a digital network society could find artistic expression. Starting out from participatory net-based projects such as *Handshake*, *Clubnetz* and *C@C – Computer Aided Curating*, the 90s saw several collaborative productions that experimentally pushed beyond established borders, facilitating an easy transition from club to lab, from video to the internet, from text to hypertext and from CD-ROMs to software.

Net artists were early to recognise the transformation of society into a network society and to reflect upon the accompanying political changes. The internet was understood as a tool of democratisation, but at the same time, artists reflected critically upon the process of increasing digitisation. As a specific branch of the visual arts, net art is a conceptual and contextual art practice that took shape at the beginning of the 90s, when the internet went public. The myriad approaches adopted in works of net art are all built on the assumption that the internet fundamentally changed the manner in which we perceive and encounter the world. Net art – whether focusing on formal, political, relational, aesthetic or material manifestations of the digital – has in the past few years given way to the term “post-digital art.”

Net art is today understood as a form of art that grew out of the context of internet culture, reflecting on it and shaping it. By working intimately on, in, and with the internet both as a material and in their own lives, younger artists also recognise and define the aesthetics and central concerns of the early twenty-first century. They formulate questions about the significance of the private sphere, about identity and the role of the subject in the network society as well as about the ownership of data and digital objects, as well as engaging in political, aesthetic and formal investigations into authorship, original and copy, the artwork and authenticity, and their dissolution under the conditions of the internet.

The show investigates the aesthetic potential of the internet, the significance of code in relation to image, and how the artwork can hold its ground in an age of globalised networks dominated by the power of corporations, social platforms and consumerism. The show also explores and thematises the notion of corporate culture and its influence on the internet and thus also on society and the cultural sphere.

The aim of the exhibition is not to establish a canon; nor is it intended as a historical survey. Instead, it sets up a dialogue between the net art activities of the 90s – with exemplary reconstructed works as well as re-interpretations – and the net art works of the current generation of Berlin-based artists. Many post-digital artists have their roots in the work of the preceding generations, and this exhibition seeks to establish that link through its protagonists as well as aesthetically. In this way, the show hopes to experimentally test the thesis that the questions addressed by these artistic investigations have remained the same, although the medium of the net itself is always changing.