

**media
art
collecting**
Perspectives of a
collection

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Space02

This text is published on the occasion of the exhibition

media.art.collecting

Perspectives of a collection

Kunsthaus Graz

Universalmuseum Joanneum

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media.art.collecting presents a comprehensive selection of works from the Neue Galerie Graz collection. Starting from *trigon 73*, the show demonstrates the very early occupation with the subject of New Media in Graz to the present day. The perspectives of this collection reveal gaps which we aim to fill by alternately adding historical and contemporary artists and works.

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In 1973 Neue Galerie Graz began collecting video art during the *Audiovisual Messages* exhibition. Even before *ars electronica* in Linz, this show was the first in Austria to focus on New Media. It was also one of the earliest exhibitions in Europe dedicated solely to video art. It featured art from the Austrian, Italian, Yugoslavian trigon region to the USA, from where the then curator of Neue Galerie, Horst Gerhard Haberl, brought back pioneering works of video art (for example by Nam June Paik, Keith Sonnier, Bruce Nauman or Trisha Brown). Since then, the collection has been growing continuously, adding various exhibits from exhibition participations. Like every museum collection, this too is neither complete nor homogeneous, and its evolution over the past forty years is marked by numerous coincidences. Until recent years, there was no systematic collecting in this field.

media.art.collecting now presents an extensive selection of works from the Neue Galerie Graz collection for ten months. Starting from

trigon 73, the show demonstrates the very early occupation with the subject of New Media in Graz. At the same time, the aim is also to intensify the institutional integration of this prolific scene spanning several generations, a goal to be initiated by this exhibition.

In addition to the high quality of the different works, the show also demonstrates the gaps in the collection, which comprises a large number of videos, video installations, but also photographs, images and objects all focusing on Western, progressive media culture.

One aim of this extensive exhibition of the collection is to close some of the gaps in the collection by means of alternating presentations, some looking back in time and some dealing with the present. Established and contemporary, young artists encourage an active examination of progressive movements, but also current developments. Two important artists in the show will be continuously replaced temporarily, with the aim of being able to transfer some of these desiderata into the collection. The museum thus

becomes just as much a current place of production.

The tightly packed exhibition above all spotlights how media realities are increasingly coming to pervade our lifeworld. That starts with early videos, that saw and made use of short film as a possible medium of art. Owing to the limited time-frame of actions, happenings or other performative art forms, the desire to capture such moments in media other than film gave rise to a new form of art that, on the one hand, began to stage itself for the medium and, on the other, to engage in a self-reflective examination of its main traits. New technologies became vehicles of an art that arose from the communication possibilities of the mass media (printing, television, radio, print media, Internet) and influenced art in general – that is, in the sense of a changing contemporary society. In simple terms, media culture implies understanding media as factors that give rise to culture. Media art, in contrast, is essentially a very misleading term, particularly as art is always constituted by means of media, and art has

always served as a medium in the broader sense. In the narrower sense, media art focuses on information carriers that transport, disseminate and store knowledge (and ignorance) for the short or long term in civilised societies. In this respect, the reception of the various New Media is a key topic, that shows how perception, communication and the significance of information change multimedially, as it were, in the mirror of media change.

media.art.collecting is based upon a broad concept of media art, on the one hand in order to demonstrate the fuzzy delimitations of the notion but also, on the other, to illustrate how profoundly media approaches can pervade each other. The works on show operate in the context of media art, reflecting on it (also in photos, light boxes, objects and painting) and thus allowing us to understand technical image media as an integral part of the art development beyond categorical boundaries. The emergence of new technologies has always caused art production and art reception to change, and with it our perception of reality.

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