Kunsthalle Wien
Press release

Radical Software:
Women, Art & Computing 1960–1991
28.2.–25.5.2025

Kunsthalle Wien announces a major new exhibition examining the pioneering role of women in digital art. It brings together over one hundred works by fifty artists drawn from public and private collections across Europe and the US.

Organised in collaboration with Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, _Radical Software: Women, Art & Computing 1960–1991_ is the first survey on the history of early digital art from a feminist perspective. The exhibition focuses on women who worked with computers as a tool or subject and artists who worked in an inherently computational way, presenting works in diverse media including painting, sculpture, installation, film, performance and many computer-generated drawings and texts.

A principally analogue exhibition about digital art, _Radical Software_ focuses on the decades that preceded the rise of the World Wide Web and the proliferation of digital information and images that ensued, shaping artistic production and visual culture in the following decades. The exhibition is titled after the magazine that Beryl Korot started with fellow artists Phyllis (Gershuny) Segura and Ira Schneider in 1970. They adopted the term software (as opposed to hardware) as a metaphor and powerful tool for social change. The magazine's wide-ranging editorial model and mission to serve as 'an evolving handbook of technology', decentralising access to information, predated the World Wide Web by two decades.

Beginning with works from the 1960s and 1970s, the exhibition spans a period from the first years of integrated circuit computing to the 'microcomputer revolution', which led to the birth of personal computing in the 1980s. The first works date from a time in which artists, poets, writers and filmmakers experimented with mainframe and minicomputers alongside mathematicians, scientists and engineers to produce and exhibit the first computer-generated images and texts. During these three decades the computer migrated from the laboratory to private, domestic space. Yet with each retelling of this history, the significant engagement of women with the technology has been largely overlooked. Set within a period that was also marked by the second wave of feminism, this exhibition documents a lesser-known history of the inception of digital art, countering conventional narratives on art and technology by focusing entirely on women.

The exhibition features artists from fourteen countries including several Austrian artists. It presents 'digital photographs' that VALIE EXPORT made in 1989 (_Selbstportrait mit Stiege und Hochhaus_ and _Stand Up. Sit Down_), alongside _Concrete Computer DisPlay_ (1988/1990), a text-based installation that has been restored especially for this exhibition. Also presented are _Plüschlove_ (1984) and _Elvis_ (1985), early videos by Gudrun Bielz and Ruth Schnell that were made at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. _Elvis_ was originally presented at Schauspielhaus Wien in their display window on Porzellangasse. The exhibition presents a number of works made by Lily Greenham, who left Vienna in 1938 after her father was arrested and transported to the Dachau concentration camp. She returned in 1952, studying at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and becoming actively

engaged with the Wiener Gruppe. The exhibition presents works and preparatory material from her 1980s *Homecomputer Graphics* series.

Radical Software: Women, Art & Computing 1960–1991 also engages with contemporary questions of how technology interfaces with issues of identity and equality. The exhibition follows a renewed interest in the post-internet discourse of cyberfeminism, which highlights the role that women played in the creation of new digital technologies and engages critically with the entanglement of technology and power structures. The exhibition's timeline plots this art history within the social and scientific legacy of computing, tracing its origins to the 17th century when the term 'computer' was first used to refer to a person performing mathematical calculations. It continues with the first algorithm written by Ada Lovelace in 1843 and the computational work done by women in the 20th century including hundreds of female mathematicians who worked at NASA in the 1950s and 1960s.

Artists
Rebecca Allen (b. 1953, Detroit)
Elena Asins (b. 1940, Madrid – d. 2015, Navarra)
Colette Stuebe Bangert (b. 1934, Columbus) & Charles Jeffries Bangert (b. 1938, Fargo – d. 2019, Lawrence)
Gretchen Bender (b. 1951, Seaford, Delaware – d. 2004, New York City)
Gudrun Bielz (b. 1954, Linz) & Ruth Schnell (b. 1956, Feldkirch)
Dara Birnbaum (b. 1946, New York City)
Inge Borchardt (b. 1935, Szczecin, formerly Stettin)
Barbara Buckner (b. 1950, Chicago)
Doris Chase (b. 1923 – d. 2008, Seattle)
Analívia Cordeiro (b. 1954, São Paulo)
Betty Danon (b. 1927, Istanbul – d. 2002, Milan)
Hanne Darboven (b. 1941, Munich – d. 2009, Hamburg)
Bia Davou (b. 1932 – d. 1996, Athens)
Agnes Denes (b. 1938, Budapest)
VALIE EXPORT (b. 1940, Linz)
Anna Bella Geiger (1933, Rio de Janeiro)
Isa Genzken (b. 1948, Bad Oldesloe)
Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (b. 1965, Strasbourg)
Lily Greenham (b. 1924, Vienna – d. 2001, London)
Samia Halaby (b. 1936, Jerusalem)
Barbara Hammer (b. 1939, Los Angeles – d. 2019, New York City)
Lynn Hershman Leeson (b. 1941, Cleveland)
Grace C. Hertlein (b. 1924, Chicago – d. 2015, Chico)
Channa Horwitz (b. 1932 – d. 2013, Los Angeles)
Irma Hünerfauth (b. 1907, Donaueschingen – d. 1998, Kreuth)
Charlotte Johannesson (b. 1943, Malmö)
Alison Knowles (b. 1933, New York City)
Beryl Korot (b. 1945, New York City)
Katalin Ladik (b. 1942, Novi Sad)
Ruth Leavitt (b. 1944, St. Paul, Minnesota – d. 2025, Baltimore)
Liliane Lijn (b. 1939, New York)
Vera Molnár (b. 1924, Budapest – d. 2023, Paris)
Monique Nahas (b. 1940, Paris) & Hervé Huitric (b. 1945, Paris)
Katherine Nash (b. 1910 – 1982, Minneapolis)
Sonya Rapoport (b. 1923, Brookline – d. 2015, Berkeley)
Deborah Remington (b. 1930, Haddonfield – d. 2010, Moorestown)
Sylvia Roubaud (b. 1941, Munich)
Miriam Schapiro (b. 1923, Toronto – d. 2015, Hampton Bays)
Lillian Schwartz (b. 1927, Cincinnati, Ohio – d. 2024, New York City)
Sonia Sheridan (b. 1925, Newark – d. 2021, Hanover)
Nina Sobell (b. 1947, Patchogue)
Barbara T. Smith (b. 1931, Pasadena)
Tamiko Thiel (b. 1957, Oakland)
Rosemarie Trockel (b. 1952, Schwerte)
Joan Truckenbrod (b. 1945, Greensboro)
Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven (b. 1951, Antwerp)
Ulla Wiggen (b. 1942, Stockholm)

Symposium: Radical Software
On the first day of the exhibition, 28 February 2025, Kunsthalle Wien and TU Wien will host a symposium in TU Wien's Prechtlsaal. It offers the opportunity to explore the thematic questions underlying the concept of the exhibition in depth together with highly distinguished female researchers from the fields of art and science including Gerti Kappel, Nadia Magnenat-Thalmann, Margit Rosen, Zsofi Valyi-Nagy, Ina Wagner and artists Gudrun Bielz, Inge Borchardt, Anna Bella Geiger, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Katalin Ladik, Sylvia Roubaud, Ruth Schnell, Nina Sobell, Tamiko Thiel and Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven. Emphasis is given to the contribution of women to the development of computers in general and digital art in particular.

Quotes
'In the early 1970s I was inspired by early twentieth-century art movements such as the Bauhaus, Constructivism and Futurism. They were looking at the technologies of the machine age and using new tools to make new forms of art but also reflecting on how machines were affecting society. I thought the computer age could be the next stage for creating a new form of art.'
Artist Rebecca Allen interviewed for the publication _Radical Software: Women, Art & Computing 1960–1991_

'Power is no longer measured in land, labour or capital, but by access to information and the means to disseminate it… Our species will survive neither by totally rejecting nor unconditionally embracing technology – but by humanising it; by allowing people access to the informational tools they need to shape and reassert control over their lives.'
Artists Beryl Korot, Phyllis (Gershuny) Segura and Ira Schneider in _Radical Software_ Vol. 1, No. 1, 1970

'The history of artists' experiments with technology is also, to an extent, a history of misuse. If the computer was intended as a machine for calculating, for thinking – as its Latin root suggests (_putare_, meaning to think or to prune), then its misuse in art history is no exception. Whether in drawing or film, text or performance, artists shifted the parameters, exploiting the machine's capacity for randomisation and locating its proclivity for the surreal, the chaotic and the disorderly … If [the computer] represented a more scientific, rational, efficient, productive and "smart" future made possible via technology, then the history of art reveals how it was co-opted for absurd and wildly eccentric projects, often edged with scepticism and critique.'
Exhibition curator and Artistic Director of Kunsthalle Wien, Michelle Cotton, catalogue essay for the publication, _Radical Software: Women, Art & Computing 1960–1991_

'In the last 25 years, female art historiography has finally picked up speed and women from the Renaissance to the present have been brought out of the shadows of male 'geniuses' and into the public eye. The exhibition _Radical Software: Women, Art & Computing 1960–1991_ once again demonstrates that it will be some time before innovative female artists who have made a significant contribution to art history receive the recognition they deserve. As City Councillor for Culture and Science, I am particularly pleased that the Kunsthalle Wien is continuing feminist art historiography with this exhibition production, doing foundational work and bringing women to the forefront in an area of technology, computers and the exploration of the digital that is unjustly associated with masculinity.'
Veronica Kaup-Hasler, Executive City Councillor for Cultural Affairs and Science, City of Vienna

Exhibition Publication
The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication with essays by Tina Rivers Ryan, Margit Rosen and the exhibition's curator, Michelle Cotton. Co-published with Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, it features over 200 illustrations, a timeline and 27 new interviews with artists from the exhibition.

Editor: Michelle Cotton
Contributors: Rebecca Allen, Laura Amann, Colette Stuebe Bangert, Sarah Beaumont, Dara Birnbaum, Inge Borchardt, Barbara Buckner, Analívia Cordero, Michelle Cotton, Rhea Dall, Agnes Denes, VALIE EXPORT, Anna Bella Geiger, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Samia Halaby, Ramona Heinlein, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Charlotte Johannesson, Alison Knowles, Beryl Korot, Katalin Ladik, Ruth Leavitt, Katalin Ladik, Hannah Marynissen, Monique Nahas & Hervé Huitric, Astrid Peterle, Carlotta Pierleoni, Andrea Popelka, Clémentine Proby, Tina Rivers Ryan, Margit Rosen, Sylvia Roubaud, Jade Saber, Ruth Schnell, Barbara T. Smith, Nina Sobell, Bettina Steinbrügge, Tamiko Thiel, Joan Trockenbrod, Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, Ulla Wiggen

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Press images for download and further information
https://kunsthallewien.at/en/exhibition/radical-software/press

A PDF of the catalogue and dossier of the exhibition texts is available on request.

All dates for guided tours and the programme are available at:
https://kunsthallewien.at/en/calendar/

About Kunsthalle Wien
Kunsthalle Wien is the City of Vienna's primary institution for contemporary art. At its locations in the Museumsquartier and on Karlsplatz, it presents an annual programme of exhibitions alongside public and educational programming that seeks to engage diverse publics. We provide a platform for artists, commissioning new works and partnering with individuals and institutions, both local and international, to develop exhibitions and publications based on original research. Kunsthalle Wien is committed to providing an inclusive space for exchange and debate and furthering the discourse on contemporary art in all its forms.

Address and Information
Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier
Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna
www.kunsthallewien.at
+43-1-52189-0
office@kunsthallewien.at
#KunsthalleWien @KunsthalleWien

Opening Hours
Tuesday–Sunday: 10:00–18:00
Thursday: 10:00–20:00

Contact Press
Katharina Baumgartner
+43-1-52189-223
presse@kunsthallewien.at