PRESS RELEASE
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VIRTUAL BODY: The human being in digital art
An exhibition project on the topic of net-oriented art at NRW-Forum
Düsseldorf – Opening as part of the festival „digitale düsseldorf",
11 March 2016 at 7 pm

The exhibition project "Virtual Body" takes up an omnipresent topic of our contemporary culture: The reciprocity between self-perception and the representation of the human body in the Internet Age. "Virtual Body", to be seen from 12th March until 17th April 2016 at NRW-Forum Düsseldorf, is devoted to a new digital form language with nine national and international artists and negotiates the relation of the virtual body to its natural counterpoint: the human being created by nature.

The international exhibition project traces an arc from American pioneers of net art like the US artist **Mark Napier**, to Second Life Performer **Gazira Babeli** and the young artist duo **Giulia Bowinkel & Friedemann Banz** from Germany, to the Canadian artist **Lorna Mills** who received world-wide recognition for her GIF animations. Additional artists are **Vuk Cosic**, **Laurence Gartel**, **Jessica Lichtenstein**, **Lorna Mills** and **Huang Siying**.

The connection of virtual elements which we normally only know from the internet (VR - Virtual Reality) with the IRL (In Real Life) has become a stylistic device of a young generation of artists. Experienced content is mixed so that we often cannot discern what is real and what is network-based. A popular theme in this is the representation of the woman in visual, net-oriented media. **Mark Napier's** work „Venus 2.0" for example makes reference to this thematic ambivalence. At the time the work was created, actress Pamela Anderson had risen to become "the" icon of the internet. Napier used her pictures from the internet and re-assembled them generatively – reminiscent of a paper collage.

The work of the Slovenian artist **Vuc Cosic** reaches back to the early net art of the 1990s. Cosic transferred popular film extracts in the retro format ASCII, a representation of graphic content exclusively with signs of the computer keyboard. With the help of this technique he reached a strong abstraction and distance to the partly erotic content of the film extracts which he used. The GIF animations of the exhibition also make use of an early format of representation:

the Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) which, developed more than 20 years ago, enables animation with only a small number of images. The GIF works of the exhibition, for example by **Lorna Mills**, relate to physical interactions which resonate with a lot more than what is obvious at first sight.

In the beginning, a very successful virtual world on the internet was "Second Life". Web users could establish whole parallel worlds with the help of an avatar on the net. The virtual artist **Gazira Babeli** used Second Life for her online performances. The work "Come Together" takes up the age-old human dream of merging with one's partner.

The US artist **Jessica Lichtenstein** uses idealized manga figurines from Japan. In her wall sculpture "Lady Leisure" she magnifies widespread clichés about women by presenting a typical female daily routine. **Laurence Gartel** from the US already occupied himself with the computer early on. In his early nude shots he employed the "Colorizer" developed by Nam June Paik to reach a psychedelic, vibrant representation.

In **Giulia Bowinkel & Friedemann Banz**' "bodypaintings", the body becomes a form-giving impulse, a flow of form. The artist duo, graduates from Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and former master students of professor Albert Oehlen, connect recordings of body movements in space with the simulation of liquids. The thus generated forms follow the movement of the human being and translate physical body language in a transparent digital gesture. With "Initial Psalm", the young Chinese artist **Huang Siying** presents a generative computer animation on the basis of 12 different hormone levels of newborn infants. With the help of an algorithm, she translates the hormone levels into fractal geometry and develops a unique artistic form language which records the first moment of life.

"VIRTUAL BODY: The human being in digital art" is curated by Wolf Lieser, **DAM Gallery, Berlin**, and the art consultancy company **ARTGATE Consulting, Düsseldorf,** Leonie Spiekermann, in cooperation with **NRW-Forum Düsseldorf**.

DAM Gallery is devoted to the aesthetic and conceptual possibilities of digital media and its influences on contemporary art (http://www.dam-gallery.de).

ARTGATE Consulting is an art consultancy company for the realisation of innovative art concepts. The company develops tailor-made solutions at the

intersection of commerce and art in Europe as well as in exchange with emerging art markets for companies, institutions and private interests. (http://artgateconsulting.com)

The NRW-Forum Düsseldorf is an international culture centre focusing on topics like contemporary photography, visual art, design, architecture, media art and creative industry – a vital factor of ideas for the entire family. (http://www.nrw-forum.de/en/).

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Term: 12.03. - 17.04.2016
Opening: Friday, 11.03.2016, 7 pm

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