

19.04 – 12.08.2018

UN  
EXCHANGE  
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**WIELS**

An interesting and representative art collection is the fruit of years of curiosity, care and passion. It is not the price that distinguishes artworks from other objects, but rarity or originality. That is why the title of this exhibition, *Unexchangeable*, emphasizes those aspects of artworks that are not simply sellable or exchangeable but rather escape the simple category of status object or trophy.

*Unexchangeable* brings together a museological selection of artworks from private Belgian collections with a focus on contemporary art from the late 1980s and early 1990s. The pivotal year of 1989 is when this period of early globalization gained momentum. The Iron Curtain – which divided the world into a communist bloc and a capitalist bloc – disappeared and with it physical as well as mental borders. In the field of information and communication networks, 1989 was the start of a spectacular development with the introduction of the World Wide Web: the beginning of the internet. In the run-up to these global upheavals, artists from the United States and Europe, and still modestly but unmistakably from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, worked to untangle and distinguish different forms and interpretations of value, challenging the logic of speculation and consumption which asserts that the quality of an artwork can only be measured by its market price.

In those years of burgeoning virtual simulations, this question of value occupied a central position in reflections on the singularity of an artwork, contrary to both the mass-produced, everyday, banal thing and to the artwork as trophy or fetish. This question of value is relevant again today, which is a key impetus behind this exhibition.