

RJ*Waste.Land*

Opening: August 05, 2025, 18:00 – 21:00

Exhibition: August 05 – August 19, 2025

Mariannenstrasse 33, 10999 Berlin

In collaboration with objekt

Published in 1922 by Anglo-American poet T.S.Eliot, *'The Wasteland'* stands as a landmark of modernist literature. Through its fragmentary exploration of myth and meaning, the poem sought to reflect a world in the grip of rapid change and social upheaval, prompted by the trauma of World War One, developing industrialisation, the disintegration of religious authority and shifting gender roles. Though published just over 100 years ago, it seems that with the emergence of AI, increasing intelligent automation, and the panic of pandemics, the concerns of the poem remain pressing today.

'Waste.Land' takes this premise – that our time is also a time of rupture, and specifically of digital rupture – and from it, builds a collection of digital paintings responding to the characters, settings and language of the original poem. At the thematic centre of the show stands an audio-visual text work – a collaborative LLM re-writing of the *'The Wasteland'* itself, which seeks to reimagine the voice of the poem for today, while also enacting a ghostly act of authorship – combining Eliot's notion of the 'depersonalised poet', as expressed in his 1919 essay *'Tradition and the Individual Talent'*, with Roland Barthes' 1967 claim that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author'.

Alongside this work, the collection partakes in the tradition of narrative illustration, imagining characters and scenes from the original text through a digital lens, reflecting and translating Eliot's sense of disillusionment through distortion and noise. *The Fisher King* perhaps searches for meaning in a never-ending stream, while *The Typist and Clerk* confronts a broken screen while observed by a dehumanised clerk. In *The Sibyl* and *Tiresias*, original Latin texts sit as subtitles beneath mythic imagery which speak of captivity and the division of the self. The portrait of *The Hermit*, meanwhile, questions the idea of self-knowledge and reflection, and defines the figure in the Tarot cards referenced in the poem. The landscapes of *On Margate Sands* and *Lilacs on the Dead Ground* present a world rendered barren and unintelligible through signal and information technologies.

Taken together, *'Waste.Land'* offers a view of contemporary digital disconnectedness in word and image.

RJ is a digital artist based in London, working with pixels, AI and GIFS. After reading Classics at Cambridge University, he went on to study an MA and then PhD in contemporary literature, in which he specialised in postmodernism, meta-modernism and theories of intertextuality. His art continues to explore these areas, and is interested in the ways emerging technologies are impacting our relationships with creation, with the canon and, ultimately, ourselves.

Creating art on the blockchain since 2021, RJ's work has since been featured in curated digital and physical shows including HITCH SWITCHERS vol.3 – Doting on Dither (May 2023), Obkjt One's 'Digital Na(t)ive' (July 2023), Explainer Gallery's 'Trader' (June 2023), Holt's Unidentified Art Object' (March 2024), Kulturmuseum Bern's Hommage a la Paul Klee (March 2024), and Accompart's Horror Vacui (May 2024).