

Ben Schumacher  
*Mister Vector*  
13. 9. – 12. 10. 2013

*When I was approached to write the press text for this show I made some visits to the gallery where I met the man who the show was titled after. The self professed “Mr. Vector” is the mailman operating in the Berlin Mitte district. An eccentric quick paced man in his early 40’s who is extremely excited about art and often lingers for some short seconds in the galleries that he delivers to – e.g. Croy Nielsen, BQ, Nagel & Draxler, and Galerie Kamm. He sees the shows at least 30 times before they come down.*

HK: What do you think of the floors in this exhibition?

Mr. V: I appreciate the ergonomic qualities, some relief from the impact on the shins all day of walking on asphalt and concrete plus just months ago I was coming home to a concrete environment. It starts to wear on your knees and back. It reminds me of the first morning waking up in my new apartment in Wedding. As I was getting out of bed the warmth of the hardwood floors surprised me, my old concrete floors stood their ground like a frontiersman but here, the space between my foot and the wood floors seemed to react, and I thought this was communication, my foot was not speaking to the floor nor was the floor aiding my foot but it was the space in between that reacted in all directions.

HK: So you see the floor as a sort of systems that reacts to irritations?

Mr. V: Yes the other day I was dropping off a box with an artwork in it...

HK: whose was it?

Mr. V: I think Marlie, you know those black puddles that were in here last spring, anyway I dropped the box on the cardboard and left this big dent in the cardboard, you can see it right over there.

HK: So if you become part of the system there is no difference between the objects of observation and the observer..

Mr. V: I am very much into surveillance. Not just of citizens I come in contact with daily but also of my circle of friends. When I was younger I would get jealous often and try to emulate others.

HK: Isn’t that everyone though?

Mr. V: My case was quite extreme, For example I was into (car) racing and I produced a very complex set of cards that could be reshuffled and arranged in order to make sense of the endeavors of my peers. Trying to track their races, careers, wins and losses. I would take into account the number of elements, the number of admissible relations, sometimes even the differing qualities of the elements- and the temporal difference in putting the elements in relation with each other. This way of balancing

made sense to me, as I was a diabetic since an early age, always trying to keep my blood sugar levels at a constant.

HK: woah that is intense. Did you know that he (Ben) is related to Schumie?

Mr.V: He told me that, I don't believe it, he can't even speak German.

HK: Why do you think Mr. Schumacher titled the show after you?

Mr. V: I don't know it seems retarded. I think maybe it's not so much about me but the space that my position occupies. Or my perspective: that I am an observer of these things (art in galleries) but I am also part of a system of communication with certain institutional arrangements, certain value preferences, a system that depends on society and vice versa.

HK: yeah all of these payphone images in the show remind me of this. They come from the backs of 2600 magazine the hacker quarterly, they are payphones from around the world referencing the lost art of phone phreaking. I see the hacker as the external observer. We know that we exist socially, that we live in a particular era, earn salaries, have expectations of retirement. So the hacker operates within the system and exploits weaknesses and insecurities.

Mr. V: that thing on the ceiling (points to the radio scanner). My father used to have one. He was into HAM radio and showed me how you could listen to other activity besides the amateur stuff. For example, you have an assault situation, first you hear dispatch contacting the police, police show up they then contact the dispatcher for the fire department and ambulance and after awhile you start to hear the news crews contacting each other describing the event to their editors. So the only thing you do not hear is the initial call to police dispatch, the observer of the event. You experience the entire event through language but in several different contexts, each system having their own language guided by their particular set of interests.

HK: So you are saying that a system is a set of differences. Like language being the difference between words, that there is no given language but just the difference between words and things. Listening to the radio one can distinguish between "attacker" and "victim", it does not matter whether there are actual differences between the two specimens thus designated (a fight on the street is rarely so clearly delineated between instigator and victim). The difference is what matters, it is what keeps language going and controls what can be said next so that something CAN be said next. Whether these differences exist in reality can remain an open question.

Mr. V: I don't totally follow you. Let's talk about the crazy dragon font. He told me that it was created from a chain of operations – sort of self-produced.

HK: yeah, it was designed by Martina Hwang initially who handed it through a chain of 15 designers who kept on refining the work of the previous designer and then finally handing it back to Hwang. I didn't get what the content of the text was from but I think she found the 15 designers on deviant art.

HK: What is your favorite thing in the show?

Mr. V: I don't know I didn't think about it too much, I guess those architectural looking things. I like that they are on the floor but also in the floor. They also seem very vacant and non-specific, virtual in that they just suggest architecture or are a quick idea of architecture.

HK: That makes sense, he purchased the digital files from various architecture firms and had them 3d printed. They are losing competition entries so they are virtual: they are fully designed but will never be built. All of them refer to parametric design as coined by Patrik Schumacher (no relation to the artist) a style that is said to have evolved out of Luhmann's Social Systems Theory. Here is something from Schumacher's website: "We pursue the parametric design paradigm all the way, penetrating into all corners of the discipline. Systematic, adaptive variation, continuous differentiation (rather than mere variety), and dynamic, parametric figuration concerns all design tasks from urbanism to the level of tectonic detail, interior furnishings and the world of products."

Mr. V: Ok, do you want to go to BQ with me?

HK: Sure

*Heinrike Klinger in conversation with Mr. Vector.*

