



**Philipp
Timischl**

**with
Pierre-Alexandre
Mateos and
Charles Teyssou**

Pierre-Alexandre Mateos / Charles Teyssou
We thought that it could be interesting to start this conversation with the very beginning of your artistic practice. When did you move to Vienna and started to study Art?

Philipp Timischl I moved to Vienna when I was 16. I quit school in Graz because of my now ex-boyfriend. Eventually I ended up in a shared flat with many people and some applied for the academy so I did too. I started studying when I was 17. It was Daniel Richter who accepted me. I studied with him for two years and then I changed to Amelie von Wulffen's class. She then advised me to do an exchange semester in Frankfurt at the Städelschule which I did. I stayed one semester but I did not really like it and also, funnily, had this other relationship again, so I went back to Vienna.

PAM/CT Did you already start to work with video? Your teachers were mostly painters.

PT Daniel Richter, Amelie von Wulffen, Michael Krebber, Birgit Megerle, yeah. I was always in painting classes and mostly tried to make paintings. What I remember is that I was so shy and quiet with others, and that because of the studio being really huge, I made super fast paintings that could be finished in minutes. Like text paintings, or series of deliberately unfinished paintings. I did not want others to see my unfinished work.

PAM/CT When did you start your TV sculptures?

PT Actually it began at the annual exhibition of the academy in Vienna. I wanted to show a text painting which said: "This is supposed to be the answer to the problem I just made up." I wasn't really happy with the painting itself. At the same time, I was watching the series *In Treatment*, which is this HBO show that deals with psychotherapy. So I thought to link them, to have the painting try to sort of resolve a mental problem. I projected the trailer of the TV show underneath the painting. It became these two landscape format images that together made a portrait format. Eventually I saved some money to buy a flat screen and I did a few works based on that same principle: a flat screen with a painting on the top of it.

But always on a wall. The TV sculpture in itself was an accident. I had the monitor in my studio just standing there and mostly used it to watch TV. I needed something that could hold the painting so I could step back and look at it, therefore I built this really simple wood structure for the back. That's when I realized that it could work nicely as a sculpture. It was placed against the window so you could see the light come through the canvas. The structure became part of the work as well as casting a shadow. You also had this contrast of the very basic wooden structure and canvas and the elaborate technical TV design with all the plugs that created almost another painting on the back.

PAM/CT When did your first solo show at 21er Haus happen?

PT It was actually right after that. I graduated in 2012 and was then invited to a group show at Galerie Emanuel Layr. Severin Dünser saw the show. He used to run the non-profit art space COCO in Vienna with Christian Kobald and offered me a solo show at the 21er Haus.

PAM/CT For this show you presented several TV sculptures which featured a 15-minute video you recorded during your holidays in Corsica. It followed a very simple storyline that was you going to your friend's house and meeting this elusive French boy that you could barely communicate with.

PT The thing was that I just exhibited my first TV sculpture. When Severin invited me to do an exhibition, I knew that I wanted to work further on them – that there was something interesting about them, but I did not quite know yet what it is. I just had this vision in mind that it would look very nice if you installed a couple of them in a room but I didn't know which content to use, which video or image I should feature. Hence the title of the show: *Philipp, I have the feeling I'm incredibly good looking but have nothing to say*. The show was in September, so the idea was then to get all the equipment and monitors ready for the exhibition, go on vacation, film my holidays, edit the material and hope that something interesting comes up.

Images (pp. 146, 149) Courtesy: the artist 2. Installation view, Vilma Gold, London, 2016 (pp. 150-151) Courtesy: the artist and Vilma Gold, London





PAM/CT Even if you document your private life, you almost never appear in them. You tend to distance yourself, right?

PT It depends on the video actually. In the video from Corsica I appear a lot because I hold the camera myself so you can follow my movements and you can hear me talking. I made it precisely very personal. I also did this series of videos in which I filmed in people's homes with my artworks spread all over the place. Some other videos I did have more of a staged feeling of intimacy. So I think there really is a variation on authentic and more generic looking "staged" privacy, but on the other hand also my own privacy and the one I am sort of invading.

PAM/CT How did things evolve after your 21er Haus solo show?

PT Only about a month after that I had my first gallery show in Frankfurt at Neue Alte Brücke titled *12346, not 5*. I realized that the TV sculptures could offer more possibilities, so decided to do a similar show again. But instead of having a single, 15-minute video synchronized on all the screens, I had a playlist of six videos playing on shuffle mode. The videos were jumping from one screen to another, sometimes overlapping or almost playing simultaneously. It created these coincidental moments. The material I used in itself was very much about recycling the material that I already had, using videos that I made while I was studying and also some elements of the 21er Haus show. Documentation pictures were printed and I used them as a base or carpet for each sculpture. It looked like little islands. It was very much about giving the imagery that I use some history and layering it. On the paintings for this show I printed press images from the TV series *Lost*. Besides just really enjoying the show, I felt like it very much relates to my own artistic practice. *Lost* is built on this weird time traveling narrative. Basically there is this one continuous storyline stretched over six seasons which is punctuated by temporal loops and flashbacks.

PAM/CT Let's talk about your 89plus residency at the Google Cultural Institute in Paris organized by Simon Castets, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Julie Boukobza. You prepared your solo exhibition at the Künstlerhaus Graz.

PT Yeah, I knew that I had an upcoming solo show at Künstlerhaus Graz and when they invited me to send a proposal for the residency I told them that I could work on that show. This exhibition for me was an experiment about how to approach an institutional context. Basically the idea was to play with all the elements that you have when you develop an exhibition. I wanted to make the opposite of what I did in my previous shows which was very much about creating objects. I wanted to build this ephemeral installation that would cease to exist after the end of the exhibition. So I decided on showing cheaply printed banners on which you had all the elements that exhibitions are made up of: the title of the show, the floor plan, the press release and so on. I sort of outsourced all these elements to other people like the graphic designer, the curator or friends. There were also smoke machines which made the installation feel like it's breathing. And my friend Daphne Ahlers created a sound piece for the show which was a cover of Linkin Park's *Rebellion*. Mostly it was a slow heavy minimal beat and sometimes she started singing in this tuned down voice. It created this feeling of the show having a heartbeat and sometimes talking to the audience. The banners then became sort of the body of that exhibition monster. In contrast to that very outsourced cold approach I also wanted something very personal which was the soft porn movie that I shot at the Google apartment in Paris. I ended up not showing the movie itself but only used screenshots. I wanted this very personal element to be in the show as well and somebody filming me during sex felt like the ultimate private thing to exhibit.

PAM/CT You play a lot with the code related to gay culture, specifically in the show you had at Martos Gallery in September 2015.

PT Yes, for the Martos show two drag queen TV sculptures were standing outside the gallery like bouncers and they were protecting the works shown inside. In a broader sense the show was very much about this hetero-normative backlash in gay culture which I think is happening now. It was really spreading from gay marriage or gay divorce to poppers and online dating to whatever. Anyhow the works inside were circling around these topics and the drag queens sort of

protected them. Actually the works inside were also kind of annoying in the sense that they were hung super low so you had to squat in order to properly see them. I like this idea of the works demanding certain actions.

PAM/CT What happened to the two sculptures after the opening?

PT After the opening we put them inside next to the entrance. They were facing each other and you had to squeeze between them to get in. This was actually sort of the starting point for the recent show at Vilma Gold. It reminded me of the anti-theft antenna systems you often see in shops. So for that show I made a series of sculptures that imitated these devices. They were placed in specific areas like the entrance, the office, the toilet, and so on. Marking territories or protecting them maybe. And again they were very much about communicating. There is sort of a ping pong effect going on when you approach a pair. The images or text on them make you go back and forth between them.

PAM/CT You are also very interested in drag queen culture.

PT There are a lot of things that interest me about drag queen culture. But one thing is that, and Ru Paul said this also, it doesn't take gender seriously, it's poking fun at it and mocking it. I mean I honestly just started with this after watching *Drag Race* and never intended it to be in my work. When I do now, I use the pictures taken from going out. I want the drunk hedonistic night element in there. Otherwise it becomes too flat and serious for me. It's really more about making fun of stereotypes or using them.

PAM/CT It's interesting that you mention the engagement of the viewer because your sculptures are actually time-based. The video loop gives a time frame to the experience of your work.

PT Yes, it's almost a performative element inscribed in the sculpture. For example, the piece I did at Perfect Present in Copenhagen, *The Blair Witch Project*. There wasn't any light in the room and the screen was dark most of the time. The video was 10 minutes long and during that time you had the

Gossip Girl intro popping up once for only about 5 seconds. So if you missed it you had to wait again in order to catch this 5-second moment. At the opening you had all this people in the room having conversations, mostly not about the exhibition, but when the sound came on and the screen lit up, the talking stopped and everybody turned towards the sculpture. Like it demanded attention. After that people slowly started to talk to each other again. On the wall behind the sculpture I had a large poster with the main cast also looking towards the sculpture or the audience. With other pieces you have similar moments. I often print screenshots of the videos on the canvas above it. So when you watch the sculpture you have this split second where the moving and the printed image are the same. I specifically used that in the 21er Haus show where that moment sort of activated the sculpture and singled out a specific moment in the 15-minute video.

PAM/CT Many of your titles oscillate between *haikus*, injunctions or social comment and address the viewer on a rather intimate level. It's especially present in the artist book you made with saxpublishers. How do you see that relationship?

PT I think it's a very direct invitation to engage with an artwork or an exhibition. My titles are often questions or relatively long sentences or comments. I like this idea of treating the works like people who have their own voice. The show in Graz was called: *They were treating me like an object. As if I were some sextoy or shit. I don't wanna see them again*. What does it mean if an exhibition is saying that about itself? In the book I made for that show you basically see 3D-rendered heads and documentation pics of previous works are used as a texture on them. At the bottom of each page underneath the head, there's a quote. I had this huge collection of sentences I thought would be fun if artworks would say them. The sentences are mostly picked up from text messaging or something I would overhear someone saying. It's funny to think about an artwork talking about its experience at an art fair or complaining about a relationship or just being whiney.

Philipp, I have the feeling I'm incredibly good looking, but have nothing to say. Installation view, 21er Haus, 2013 (pp. 154-155) Courtesy: the artist and Belvedere, Vienna

