

HALBE HALBE

**MARTIN GRANDITS
& SIMON MULLAN**

13.09.-08.10.2023

An exhibition about halfness and the insufficiency of mathematical models for the arithmetic of interpersonal relationships demands a text partly about art and partly about friendship. Perhaps the only place mathematical modes of appraisal might be reasonably deployed is in relation to the very text itself: half of it may be good, and the other half...well, maybe less so. (I'll give myself some credit: one quarter is eher solala, the other is eher so gschmackssache.)

However, growing up, a foundational principle we learn in math class is that halves can be expressed in many different ways, but that ultimately, they all reflect the same value – this is of course true in friendship. Friendship is necessarily dialogical; it can – and always will – take two to tango. And yet, a sentimentally barren conception of friendship as merely a 1:1 ratio obfuscates the many parts that go into how people interact. The (in)accuracy of the half in this instance becomes the fulcrum on which the exhibition pivots: this duo exhibition is made whole by its two requisite parts in Mullan and Grandits, but the form does little to speak to where their works may intersect and diverge, and makes little claim to the form itself being an explanation in this regard. Nonetheless, friendship above all, Habschi Habschi (short version of the Austrian dialect Hawara) from the start (and hopefully, to the end).

To paraphrase Isabelle Graw on Derrida in Vom Nutzen der Freundschaft and the numeric issue within the politics of friendship as Aristoteles understood it as a matter of rarity and therefore an ethical friendship should never be shaped by more than two people. It seems Mullan and Grandits are taking a step forward by taking a step back, disregarding the ‚inflation of friends‘. Two half are needed to make a whole, no more. An gescheiter Hawara (Austrian for a good friend, mostly between two male) is what Mullan is for Grandits and the other way around.

Work, work, work. Never stop; always eight to five. Kaffee Kippe. Nestle instant coffee, Marlboro light and a boiled egg (wenn's oben schwimmt ist's schlecht, also lieber untergehen — und das auch lieber zusammen) to start on the daily storm of living and restlessness that comes with the need to make it. What's left, though? Both Grandits' and Mullan's work seem to be a reflection of the fast-paced and burnt-out, chasing the chimera of satisfaction. A devilish cycle of a true Alltag. Most of the time, the fruits of our labor amount to little more to detritus that line the bottom of our closets; rarely used gym memberships. Grinding teeth on two day old Stullen, never on gold. Losing focus whilst daydreaming, racing towards purple clouds escaping the apocalypse, but then slapped by reality — wide awake. At best, you create a new you: Pinstriped suits paired with the new M1906 DF, never losing your New Balance, staying grounded now that you made it the top floor of DB Tower 18th floor; so much closer to the sun. A modern Icarus protected by VELUX INTEGRA and yet the wax continues to drip, the integrity of your wings forever in question.

Mullan uses the Blaumann as material by connecting the cut-up remnants in a Paul Klee-esque manner. For Die Firma, Mullan is continuously referencing labor. His work can not only be described as a reflection of the company as a whole, but the togetherness of the workers and their connections on a human level. It's never about making it as an individual, it's about showing up and getting things done together. Setting up a dialogue of Mullan's work Die Firma, a culmination of endlessly cut down Blaumann suits, with Grandits' installations and their overloaded materialism, suggests a strange loneliness. One wonders how many people are really needed to make a ‚together‘ or a ‚whole‘, and how many can be together, whilst still being wholly ‚alone‘. A society that is fractured by halves, quarters, fifths, sixth, eights tries to hold together what Grandits' work makes fall apart: society as a whole driven by anxiety of never making it.

As the visitor stumbles through the exhibition trying to put a puzzle of triangles and circles together, Grandits and Mullan float, half asleep half awake - schlaftrunken and maybe a bissl betrunken — on their own created cloud, filled with a shared sense on how they see the world as a whole by taking it apart. Stitching, plastering, welding, and folding, but in the end both artists's work being a reflection of shared trauma, and turning it — with a very specific sort of humor — into positivity. ALLES WIRD GUT.

Text: Hannah Weidner
@hnahdnr

HERMETIKA

2nd floor
Weserstraße 185
12045 Berlin

info@hermetika.net
www.hermetika.net
@hermetika.berlin



Exhibition views Halbe Halbe

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