

# bitforms gallery

Björn Schülke

## *Vision Instruments*

January 18 – February 19, 2017

**Opening reception:** Wednesday, January 18, 6 – 8 PM

**Gallery hours:** Wednesday – Saturday, 11 AM – 6 PM & Sunday, 12 – 6 PM

bitforms gallery continues its fifteen-year anniversary season with *Vision Instruments*, Björn Schülke's second solo show with the gallery. The exhibition presents new works by the artist, which continue to build upon his unique blend of utopian and dystopian machine aesthetics.

The works in *Vision Instruments* recollect the technological inventions in *Raumpatrouille Orion*, or *Space Patrol Orion*, the first German science fiction television series aired in 1966. In this imagined future, the world is without nations. While Earth is united, humans and aliens are at war in space; the fictional spaceship "Orion" flies through the universe at the fastest speed ever achieved by humans. This idealistic utopianism riddled with Cold War ideology of conquest and space travel is present throughout Schülke's oeuvre, no less the works comprising *Vision Instruments*.

Beam emitting engines, fantastical drones, mirror machines—these are some of Schülke's "vision instruments," as described by the artist. Employing materials and methods more typical to industrial design than sculpture, the works are pseudo-scientific tools made with outright precision, yet entirely futile in function. At the same time, the works build upon a tradition of open form sculpture, augmented with mechanical and electronic components such as solar panels, infrared surveillance devices, and air propulsion mechanisms.

The sculptures are highly synthetic devices that take on anthropomorphic qualities. As the works collect energy from their surrounding environment, propellers unexpectedly spin or arm-like protrusions extend and recoil for no apparent reason. *Defender*, a kinetic sound sculpture, orbits around itself. Intentionally elusive, we may ask what this technological contraption is defending: us or itself?

Björn Schülke (b. 1967, Cologne, Germany) is a sculptor, whose works are a unique blend of utopian and dystopian machinic visions. His works are scientifically investigative—operable yet non-functioning flying machines, solar contraptions, and vision instruments. Referencing Leonardo da Vinci's engineering inventions, the Russian avant-garde, and popular science fiction, his kinetic, open form sculptures are imaginative apparatuses, gesturing toward an unknown future. Recent exhibitions of his work include Minnesota Street Project, San Francisco, CA; Boghossian Foundation – Villa Empain, Brussels, Belgium; National Art Musem, Beijing, China; Borusan Contemporary, Istanbul, Turkey; Telfair Museum of Arts, Savannah, GA; Museum Villa Rot, Burgrieden, Germany; KulturBahnhof, Kassel, Germany; Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid, Spain; Verbeke Foundation, Stekene, Belgium; Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlin, Germany; and the Biennale of Electronic Arts, Perth, Australia. Schülke holds a postgraduate diploma from the Academy of Media Art (KHM) in Cologne, Germany.

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Founded in 2001, bitforms gallery represents established, mid-career, and emerging artists critically engaged with new technologies. Spanning the rich history of media art through its current developments, the gallery's program offers an incisive perspective on the fields of digital, internet, time-based, and new media art forms.

For images and more information on the exhibit, please visit [www.bitforms.com](http://www.bitforms.com) and [www.schuelke.org](http://www.schuelke.org).

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