

RÉMY MARKOWITSCH



BIBLIOTHERAPY

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2001-2003

## Rémy Markowitsch in collaboration with Michael Ming Hong Lin

### **BonsaiPotato, 2001:**

Polyester, wood, paint, lacquer/varnish,  
lighting, 450 x 302 x 495 cm  
table element design:  
Philipp von Matt, Architect, Berlin

### **Videos on harddisk (HD) / DVD :**

- Bouvard et Pécuchet: ca. 12 h (1 HD+1DVD)
- Inventaire de la bibliothèque de Gustave Flaubert:  
(DVD) Loop aprox. 20 min (1 DVD)
- Robinson Crusoe: ca. 12 h (1 HD)
- Der grüne Heinrich: ca. 42 h (4 HD)

**Floorpainting:** Michael Ming Hong Lin  
(Villa Merkel, Liverpool Biennial, Kunstmuseum Luzern)  
Pentalite on wood

### **Bibliotherapy meets Bouverad et Pécuchet...**

For his *Bibliotherapy* project, Rémy Markowitsch invited 25 people to read *Bouvard et Pécuchet* aloud section by section. The readings took place in both Paris, where the narrative begins, and Normandy, the main geographical setting of the novel. The artist recorded the readings with a digital video camera. The resulting videos, which portray the readers as if in a photograph extended through time, are an essential constituent of the project's varying forms of presentation.

Today the therapeutic practice of bibliotherapy is applied primarily in the treatment of children. Historically, Aristotle may be considered its predecessor. Among the first to ascribe therapeutic qualities – mental/spiritual cleansing and purification – to the material of literature, he declared in his *Poetics* that catharsis, the purification of the emotions, is the function of



*BonsaiPotato*, 2001, Villa Merkel, Galerien der Stadt Esslingen am Neckar

tragedy. The choice of reading material is motivated not only by Alberto Manguel's *A History of Reading*, but also by the artist's long-time affinity with Flaubert's unfinished novel *Bouvard and Pécuchet*.

Like the novel's two protagonists, Markowitsch's artistic research leads him into the "domain of things already said" and into that of things already seen or shown, that is, the texts in the archives of knowledge: "they try everything, they touch and are drawn to everything; they put everything to the test of their marginal industry ... with constant recourse to their extensive reading, all the seriousness of science and the most solemnly printed truths."

But unlike Bouvard and Pécuchet, Markowitsch is hardly a naïve believer; he is a probing layman whose complex experimental trials might in fact be assigned to the "gay sciences", for his successes do not rest on the quest for truth but rather on the enr(u)ptured hybrid otherness of his bizarre and at times disturbing findings. An otherness indebted to sameness, twice over, the sameness of provenance and production, to the copy, to the reproduction and thus, in a certain sense, also to the quotation and the reference.

The *Bibliotherapy* project revolves around the conditions and constitution of knowledge and meanings, the principles underlying their construction and the ways in which they function and, thus, around the conditions of art production itself. It is a marginal phenomenon, which intentionally occupies spaces in between, in between literature and therapy, light and food, bonsai and potato, Bouvard and Pécuchet, Markowitsch and Lin, etc. The in-between is concept through and through, artistic practice which eludes unequivocal placement in space and engages experimental agendas in order to investigate and test patterns of thought and perception. Rémy Markowitsch's compact assemblages, constructs of visual and extra-visual structures, vague chance encounters, vicinities and familiarities are always plural. And that gives *Bibliotherapy* the feel of a work in progress, continuously modified and reshaped depending on venue and cultural context.



*Bibliotherapy meets Bouvard et Pécuchet*, 2001  
Gilles et Elodie (DVD-Installation), Floorpainting: Michael Lin  
Villa Merkel, Galerien der Stadt Esslingen am Neckar



*Bibliotherapy meets Bouvard et Pécuchet*, 2001 (Videostills: Gilles et Elodie)

## Robinson Crusoe and...

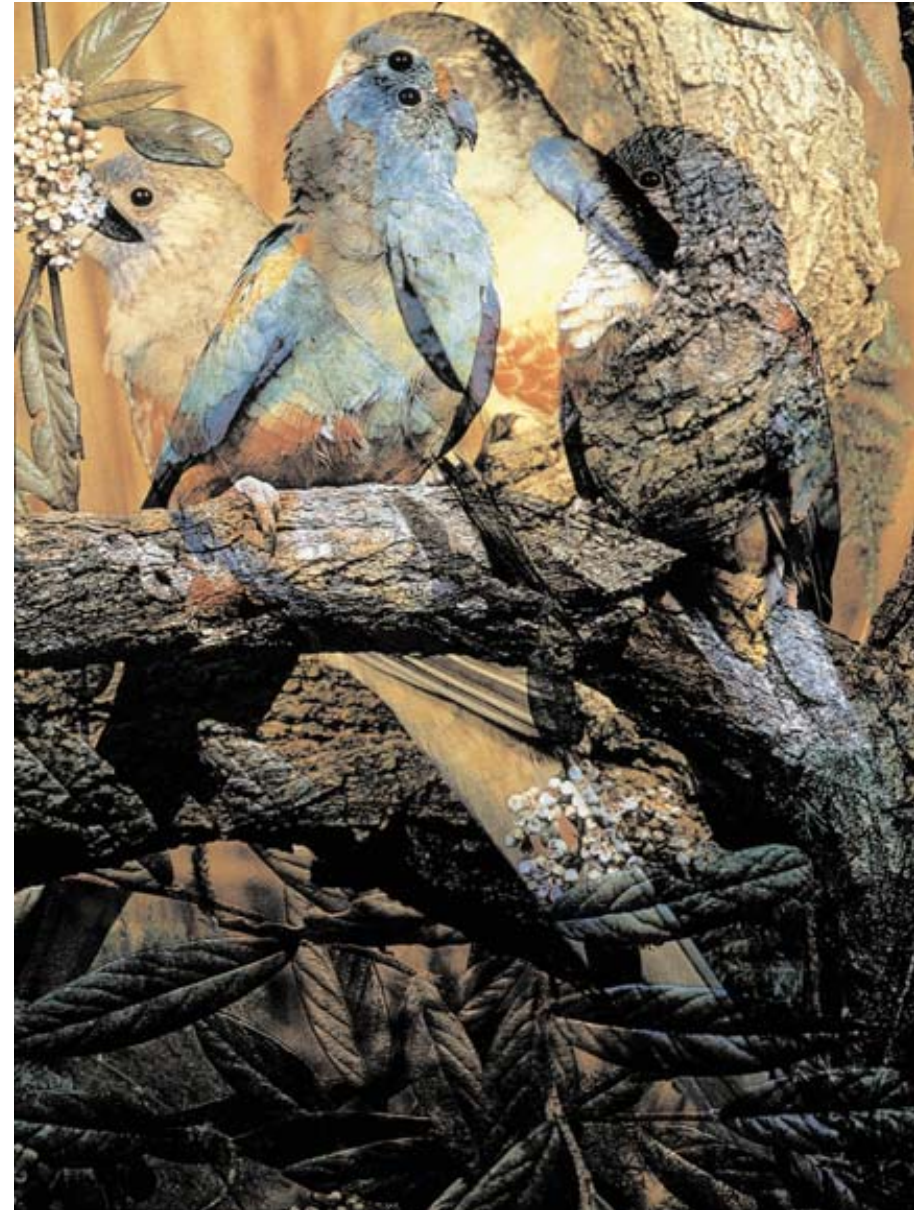
For the Liverpool Biennale 2002, Markowitsch filmed 130 readers read out loud Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in Great Britain. This novel, deeply rooted in the country's heritage, is not only a timeless story of adventure but also one of the world's most famous blue-prints for Utopia. The book has been translated into every conceivable language and has inspired countless imitations from Japan to Switzerland to current media variations, like *Big Brother* and BBC's *Robinson Experiment*.

The island motif is a paradox, both sanctuary and threat. The contradiction inherent in Robinson's situation – civilisation meets the wild – becomes obvious as he fluctuates between the role of the civilised middle-class businessman and the primitive lover of nature. The dream of the lonely island ranges from complete freedom from social constraints and responsibilities to total control, autocracy and omnipotence. Robinson tries to transform the island into a European world, a doppelganger of the great island of his origins.

A direct reference to bibliotherapy is found in Robinson's use of the Bible. He creates his own universe with the help of a few utensils rescued from civilisation: tobacco and paper, a gun and a Bible. As Alberto Manguel observes, Robinson was "the founder – the reluctant founder – of a new society. And Daniel Defoe, his author, thought it necessary that at the beginning of a new society there should be books."

Having guaranteed his "mere" survival, the lost hero places the Bible at the core of the new society. The Bible gives him moral support, advice and sustenance. Robinson's library was not just guidance and support, it was an essential tool of the new society, as Alberto Manguel remarks, underscoring the significance and impact of the human ability to read.

Defoe did not invent the character of Robinson or the basic features of island living, any more than Flaubert invented *Bouvard and Pécuchet*: the timeless best-seller, *Robinson Crusoe*, with its untold



LOULOU 1 (RC Print, acrylic glass, wood, 160 x 210 cm)

sequels and rewrites meets up with the unfinished, unfathomable sampler, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, in the literary universe, in the infinite space of the library in which they are incorporated.

### ... Der grüne Heinrich.

For the exhibition in Lucerne, Markowitsch has produced Bibliothérapie's third and most ambitious station. Devoted to Gottfried Keller's Bildungsroman *Der grüne Heinrich*, it follows the formal and thematic four-volume plan of that work and is made up of four categories of reader: Markowitsch filmed a large number of young people reading, fellow artists in Berlin and Switzerland (mainly in their studios), as well as a sequence of woman readers. For the fourth volume, the artist himself assumed the role of reader.

The presentation in the main exhibition hall of the Museum of Art Lucerne is the culmination in this convergence of three major works of world literature, read in the original languages, in stages, by some 260 performers. Written language, spoken language and picture-language interweave in five video projections and on monitors. Markowitsch's monumental, glowing sculpture *BonsaiPotato* that serenely dominates the area and Michael Ming Hong Lin's virtually wall-to-wall floral pattern floor-painting lend the installation a distinctive atmosphere. The collaboration with Taiwan/Paris-based Lin (b. 1964), who caused a furore in the newly reopened Palais de Tokyo site for contemporary arts in Paris with a big installation last year, is of interest not least in the light of traditions of male and/or artist friendships, a subject that likewise links the three literary works.

>Garden-Weitzel.pdf

> Antje Weitzel, "Garden of Twisted Paths", in:  
**Rémy Markowitsch Bibliothérapie**  
Andreas Baur, ed. (Edizioni Periferia, 2001)



LOULOU 2 (RC Print, acrylic glass, wood, 160 x 210 cm)



*Bibliotherapy meets Robinson Crusoe*, with Michael Lin (floorpainting), Liverpool Biennial International, 2002, commissioned by Henry Moore Foundation, Contemporary Projects



*Bibliotherapy meets Robinson Crusoe*, with Michael Lin (floorpainting), Liverpool Biennial International, 2002, commissioned by Henry Moore Foundation, Contemporary Projects



*Bibliotherapy meets Robinson Crusoe*, 2002 (Videostills selec. from 138 readers) Liverpool Biennial International, 2002, commissioned by Henry Moore Foundation, Contemporary Projects





*Bibliotherapy meets Der grüne Heinrich*, 2002/3 (Videostills, selection from 140 readers) supported by Landys & Gyr Foundation, Zug for Museum of Art Lucerne



*Bibliotherapy meets Robinson Crusoe, Bouvard et Pécuchet and Der grüne Heinrich. Museum of Art Lucerne, 2003 (Crusoe)*



*Bibliotherapy meets Robinson Crusoe, Bouvard et Pécuchet and Der grüne Heinrich.* Museum of Art Lucerne, 2003 (Plinth with *The Readers Book*) Floorpainting: Michael Lin

## Bibliotherapy



*Bibliotherapy meets Bouvard et Pécuchet*, 2001 (Videostills: Arnaud et Yvan)

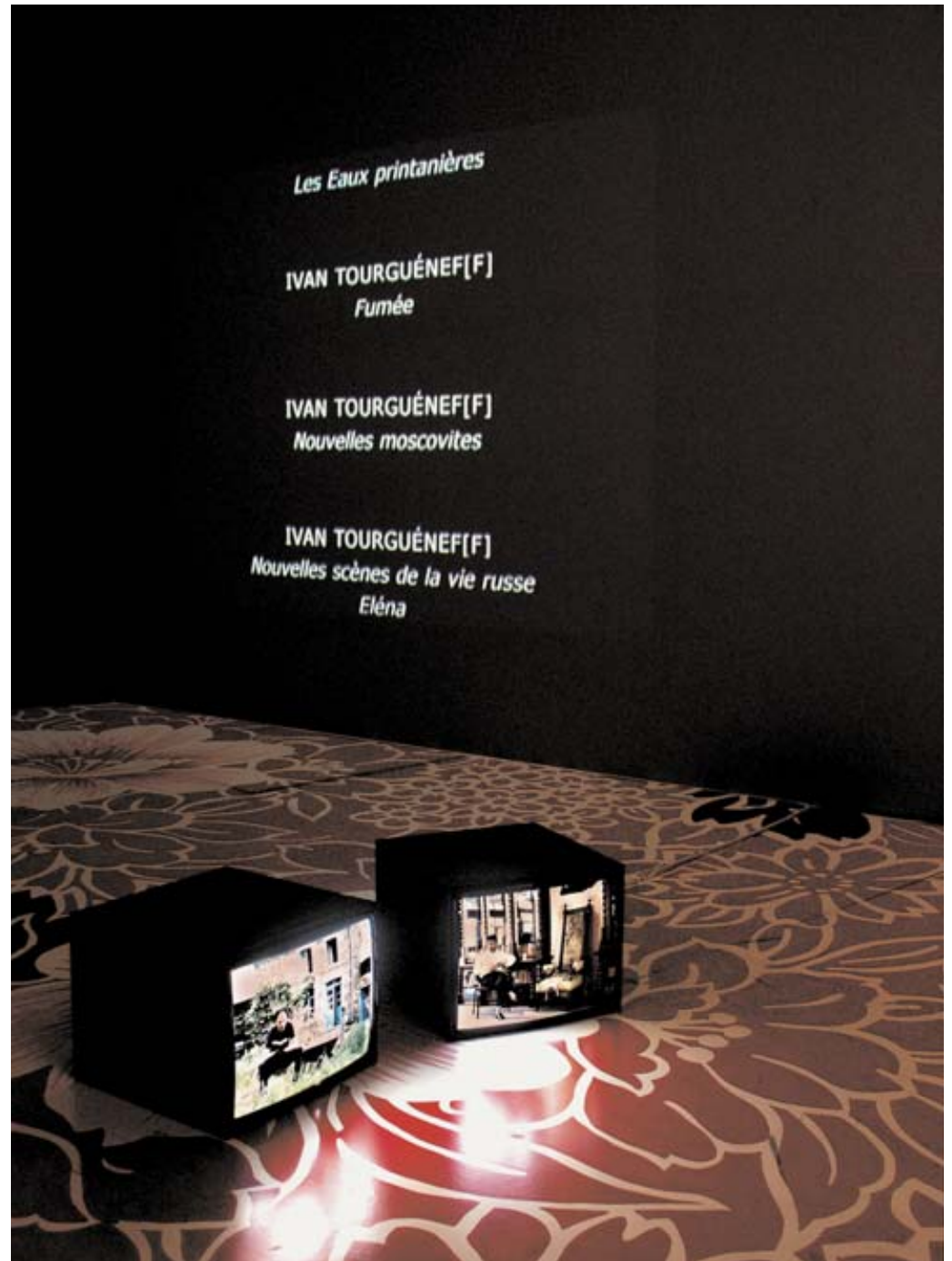
*Bibliotherapy meets Robinson Crusoe, Bouvard et Pécuchet and Der grüne Heinrich*. Museum of Art Lucerne, 2003

Floorpainting: Michael Lin

monitors: *Bouvard et Pécuchet*

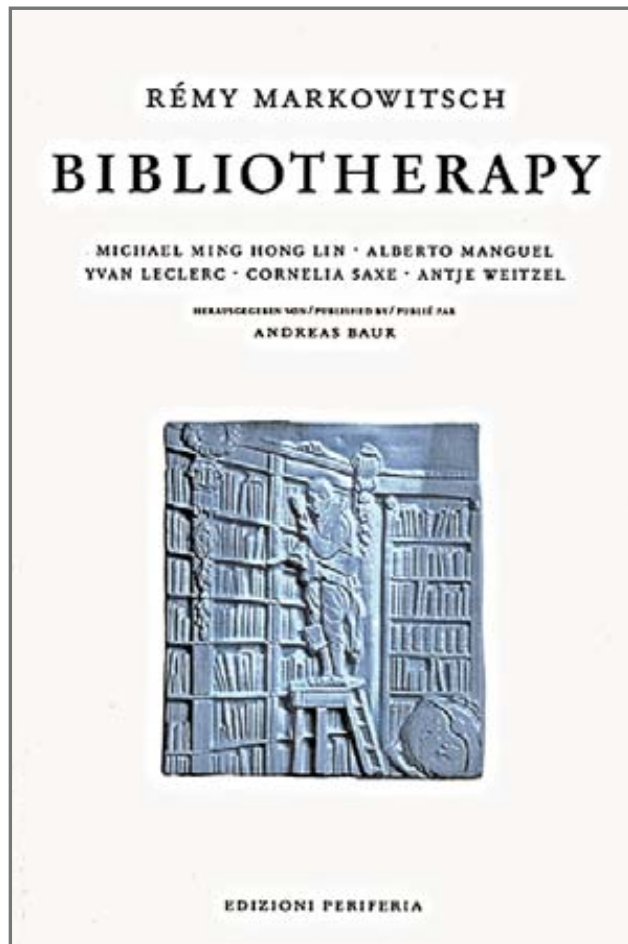
projection: Inventaire de la bibliothèque de Gustave Flaubert

Photos Museum of Art Lucerne: Andrea Capella, Lucerne >>





*Bibliotherapy meets Robinson Crusoe, Bouvard et Pécuchet and Der grüne Heinrich.* in collaboration with Michael Lin (floorpainting) Museum of Art Lucerne, 2003



PUBLICATION:  
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Languages: D/F/E  
Pages: 420  
Published by Andreas Baur  
Edizioni Periferia, 2002  
ISBN 3-9522474-4-8

Bibliotherapy was realised by  
VILLA MERKEL,  
GALERIEN DER STADT ESSLINGEN AM NECKAR

sponsored by  
PRO HELVETIA  
LANDIS & GYR FOUNDATION, ZUG  
for the MUSEUM OF ART LUCERNE  
STANLEY THOMAS JOHNSON FOUNDATION

commissioned by  
HENRY MOORE FOUNDATION, CONTEMPORARY PROJECTS

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