

# On Travel (2004)

Rémy Markowitsch

On Travel is an exhibition and book project by Rémy Markowitsch documenting the outcome of his expeditions into the inner sanctum of books on travel and photography on Africa, China and South America.

The core of the exhibition consists of a complex installation in which Markowitsch contrasts portraits from Claude Lévi-Strauss's "Tristes Tropiques" with images of swampy tropical terrain, and, borrowing from Nigel Barley's "The Innocent Anthropologist: Notes from a Mud Hut" (1997), combines them with a walk-in model, a type of modernistic primeval hut ("Barley")\*. The multilayered picture quotations are underlined acoustically by a compilation of Markowitsch's travels through the tropical literature, with a spectrum extending from Robert Müller's "Tropen" (1915) to Claude Lévi-Strauss's "Tristes Tropiques" (1955) and Johannes Fabian's "Out of our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa" (2001). In his photographic transilluminations of select pages of pictures and quotations from literary and scientific travelogues Markowitsch casts a new light on collections of tropical and alpine pictorial worlds. He playfully deconstructs the white traveller's perspective and his encounters with "the foreign", and turns it a theme, re-organising, re-situating the context and re-plotting the topos of the tropics.

\*Barley: In collaboration with Philipp von Matt., Arcitect, Berlin [www.phvm.com](http://www.phvm.com)

Publication:

On Travel

Edited by Markus Stegmann, Museum zu Allerheiligen Schaffhausen, Kunstverein Schaffhausen, Switzerland.

A picture book with quotations from literary and scientific sources.

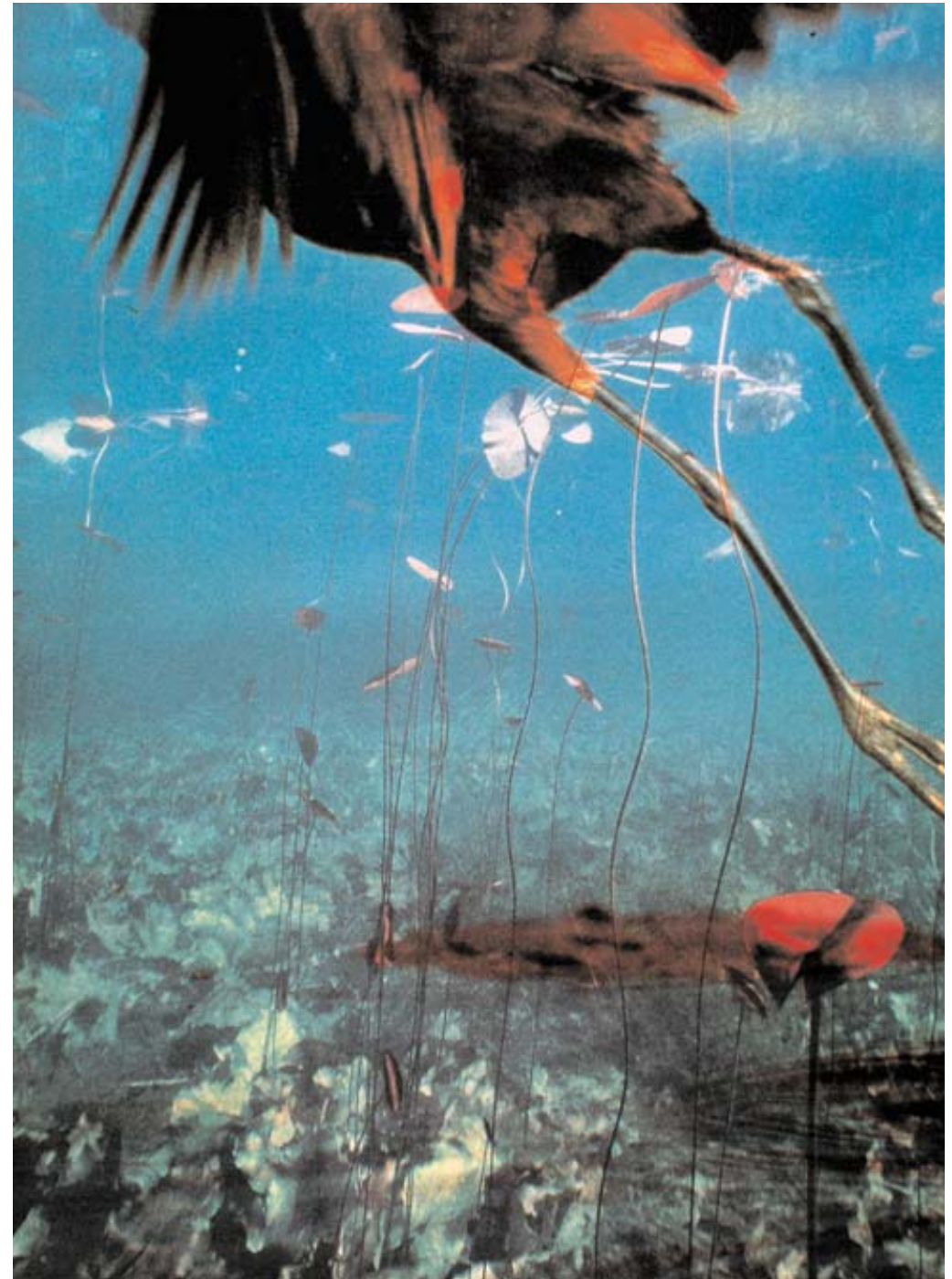
German and English edition. 130 pages ill. in colour. Hard cover. 17,5 x 28 cm.

ISBN 3-936711-31-3

Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg

© by Rémy Markowitsch, Berlin und Luzern, 2004

[www.markowitsch.org](http://www.markowitsch.org)



On Travel 001 Rémy Markowitsch (2004)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 220 x 160 cm



*BARLEY* (Kunstverein Schaffhausen, 2004)  
Rémy Markowitsch in collaboration with Philipp von Matt, Arcitect, Berlin [www.phvm.com](http://www.phvm.com)  
Installation: Wood material, paint, beer bottle, book, chicken claws. 226 x226x306 cm.

Foto: Jürg Fausch, Schaffhausen





*BARLEY* (Kunstverein Schaffhausen, 2004)  
Rémy Markowitsch in collaboration with Philipp von Matt, Arcitect, Berlin [www.phvm.com](http://www.phvm.com)  
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THE INNOCENT ANTHROPOLOGIST

... people called the Bororo; this they connected with the  
... generally to the nomadic Fulani, the Mbororo. It  
... proof that Fulanis hailed from South America and had  
... rized these inferior races. Several young men offered  
... theory worthy of a Thor Heyerdahl. It explained their  
... and long, non-frizzy hair, their straight noses and thin  
... lips. They were often at great pains to point out that my exposed  
... parts, brown from the sun, were the same colour as theirs, pale  
... from wear.

The dry season development that most delighted the Dowayos  
was the arrival of my fridge. I had long sought to buy a paraffin  
refrigerator, regarding them wistfully in the city shops, but they  
cost more than I could afford and the difficulty of transporting  
them put the whole matter out of the question. In the abandoned  
house of the Dutch linguists who had worked on the language of  
the Dowayos there lingered such a machine. One day I had the  
good fortune to bump into them at N'gaoundere and they offered  
to lend it to me. I could not believe my luck; I should have cold  
water and fresh meat. My reliance on tinned food would be  
reduced; and some of the pressure on my finances would be  
relieved. I set it up outside my fine new house, the roof of which  
was just being completed. It was considered a great joke when I  
asked why they had left off the normal spikes that protect a  
house-dweller against witchcraft. Everyone knew that a white  
man was not subject to attacks from witchcraft just as everyone  
knew that he must live in a square, not a round house. My own  
house was consequently built square and, instead of witchcraft  
remedies, an empty beer bottle was placed on top.

To celebrate, Jon and Jeannie came out and we drank cold  
beer with an ecstatic Zuuldibo. My 'cold granary' was a source of  
great wonder to everyone. It baffled them – as it rather did me –  
how a fire in my 'granary' made it cold. I could not resist the  
temptation of showing them ice, which none but the greatest  
sophisticates had previously encountered. They were terrified.  
Never having experienced such extreme temperature difference,  
Dowayos could insist that ice felt 'hot'; if they touched it, it  
would burn them. I never fully convinced them that it was merely  
water in another form. Watching it melt in the sun, they would

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THE WET AND THE DRY

... say, 'The cold matter has gone away. Only the water in  
... left.' Even the Old Man of Kpan was obliged to come away  
... this wonder, in accordance with his role of keeper of the  
... mysteries.

This enabled me to re-establish contact with him and remind  
him of his promise that I might visit him. The trip was arranged  
for the following week. His son would come to guide us.

To my great surprise, the boy arrived on the appointed day  
and Zuuldibo insisted on accompanying us. The trek was en-  
livened, as we approached the daunting mountains for the first  
time, by encounters with mountain dwellers. I was amused to  
note that the women here greeted me as their 'lover'. It was  
explained to me that this was a peculiarity of the area and much  
play was made of it. Having crossed the long, hot plains, dotted  
with salt-licks where wild beasts and cattle sought sustenance  
side by side, we began the climb. Temperatures at this time of  
year could be well over 110°F at noon, and both Matthieu and I  
were soon bathed in sweat. I had brought drinking water which  
he piously declined, but he was unable to avail himself of the only  
stream we passed since – as I have mentioned – highland water is  
forbidden to lowland Dowayos unless offered by a local resident.  
The Old Man's 'son' turned out to be some sort of a cousin and  
was not empowered to make the offering. The path climbed  
steadily through patchy trees. At whatever time of year one travel-  
led, it was at grave risk to life and limb. In the wet season one  
could hang on to vegetation while clambering up rock-faces, but  
the ground was covered with grass and occasionally one foot  
would simply shoot off into space as the path became a dotted  
line on the cliff wall. In the dry season one could see the surface  
and better place the feet, but there were no handholds to rectify a  
mistake.

We shared our journey with jibbering baboons who sent loose  
shale cascading down on us from above. Beneath was a sheer  
drop of three hundred feet or more to a river which gashed through  
granite boulders. We all laughed nervously when Zuuldibo  
remarked on his fear of falling as he did not know how to swim.  
After several hours' rough passage we came out on a plateau  
with fantastic views over the whole of Dowayoland. I lay

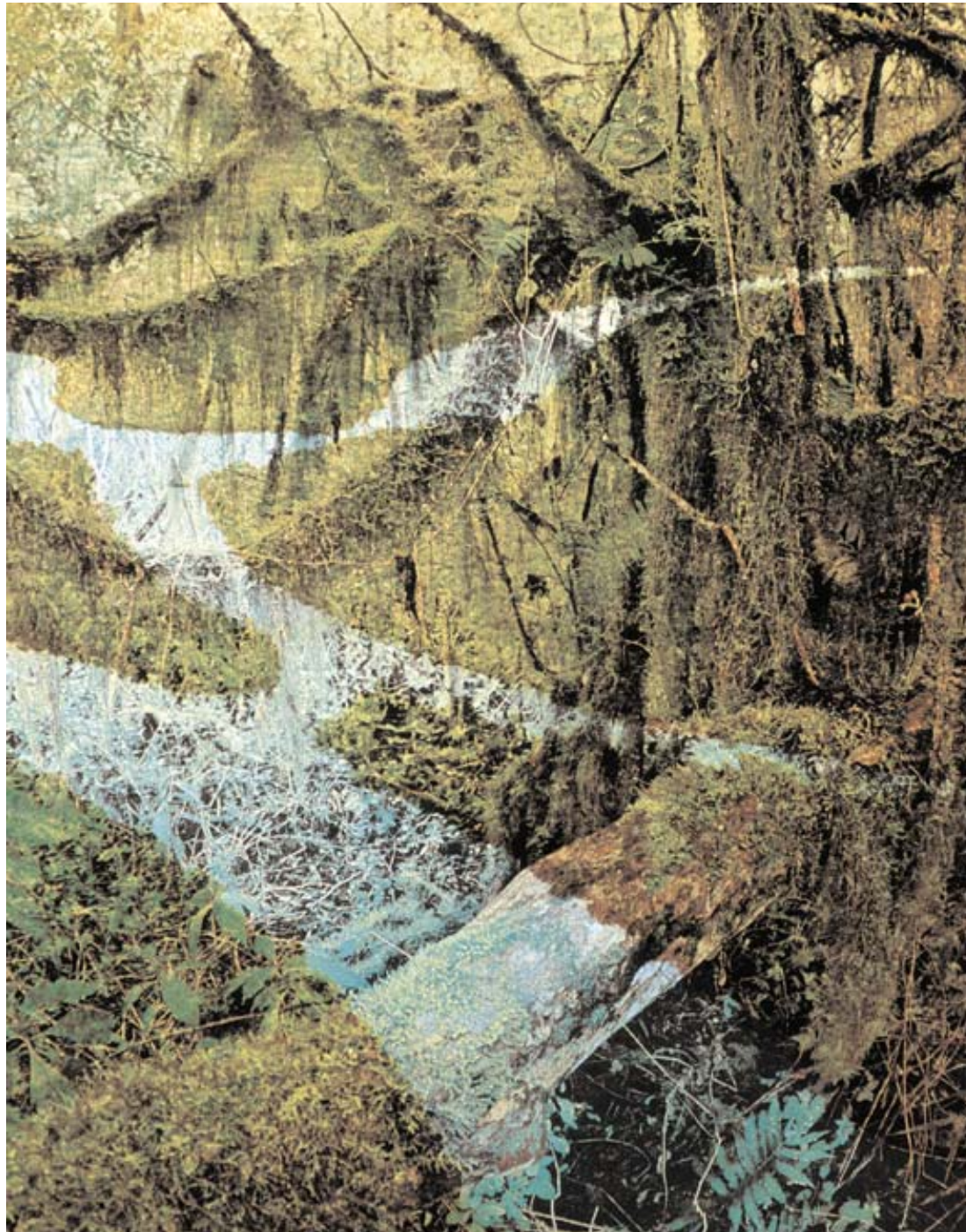
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BARLEY (ON TRAVEL Rémy Markowitsch, Kunstverein Schaffhausen, 2004)

Foto: Jürg Fausch, Schaffhausen

Installation: Book (Nigel Barley's "The Innocent Anthropologist: Notes from a Mud Hut"), chicken claws.





*On Travel 058* (2004) Rémy Markowitsch  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 220 x 166 cm





*On Travel 049* (2004) Rémy Markowitsch  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 178 x 178 cm

## On Travel: «Tristes Tropiques» Rémy Markowitsch

01-20, 2004

Series. RC print, glass, wood. 87x67 cm.

© for the photographs in «Tristes Tropiques» Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1955/2004

By kind permission of the author and the publishers Editions Plon, Paris

Courtesy: Museum zu Allerheiligen, Kunstverein Schaffhausen /

Galerie EIGEN+ART, Berlin / Galerie UrsMeile, Lucerne

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### On Travel

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On Travel: « Tristes Tropiques » Rémy Markowitsch (04/2004)  
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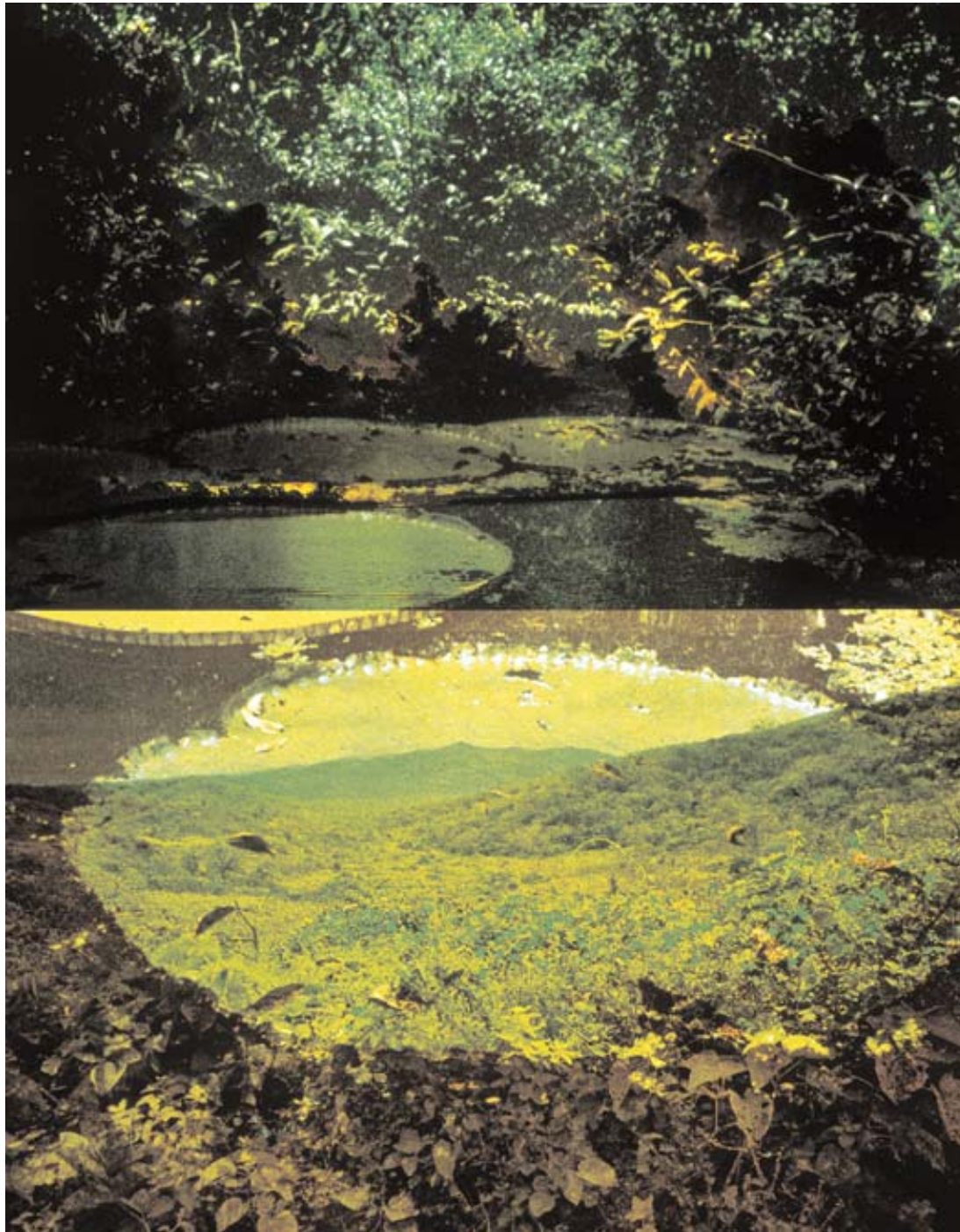
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On Travel: « Tristes Tropiques » Rémy Markowitsch (20/2004)  
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*On Travel 059* Rémy Markowitsch (2004)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 170 x 220 cm



*On Travel* 060 Rémy Markowitsch (2004)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 170 x 220 cm





*On Travel 046* Rémy Markowitsch(2004)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 160 x 240 cm





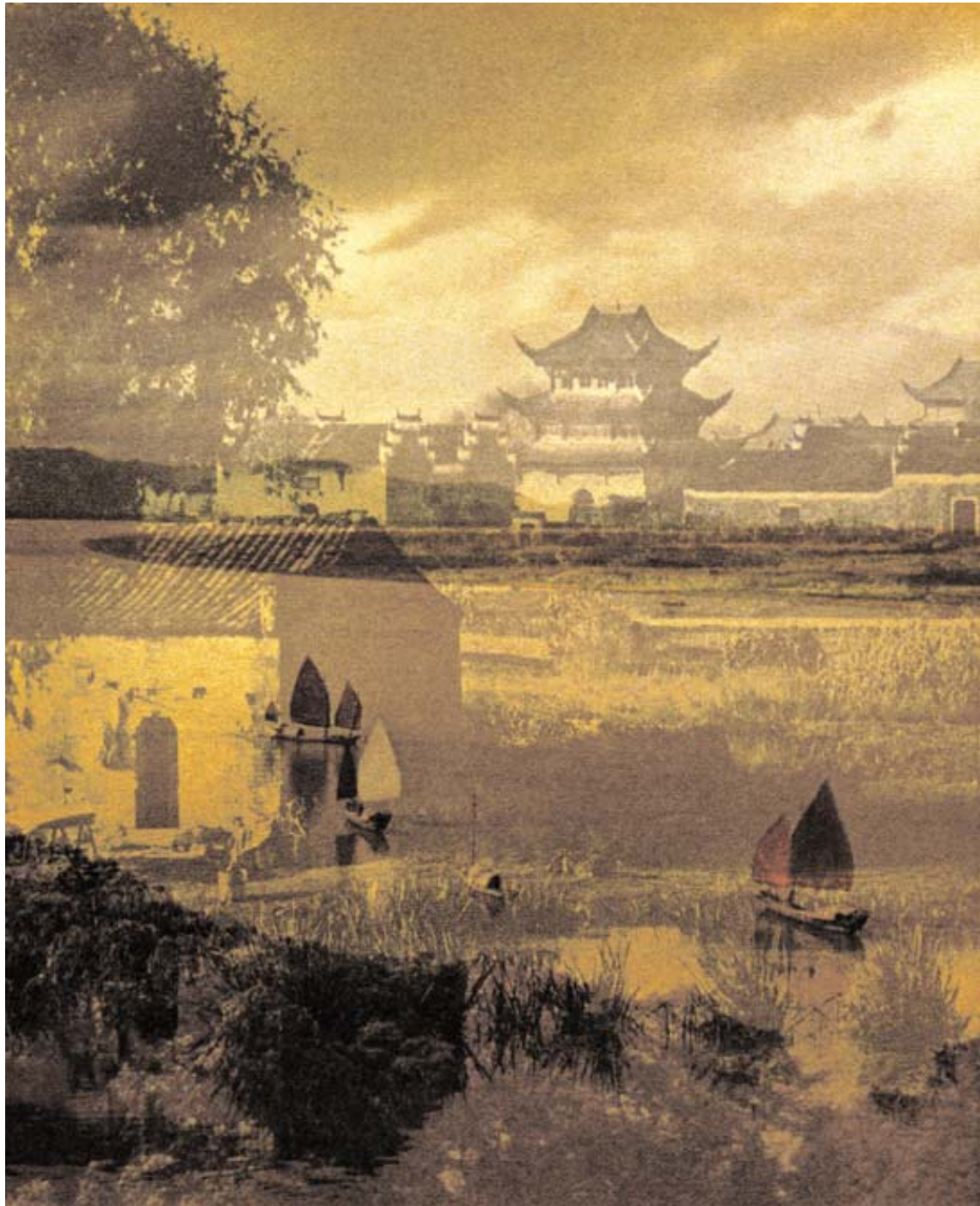
*On Travel 017* Rémy Markowitsch (2004)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 160 x 240 cm





*On Travel 067* Rémy Markowitsch (2004)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 170 x 220 cm





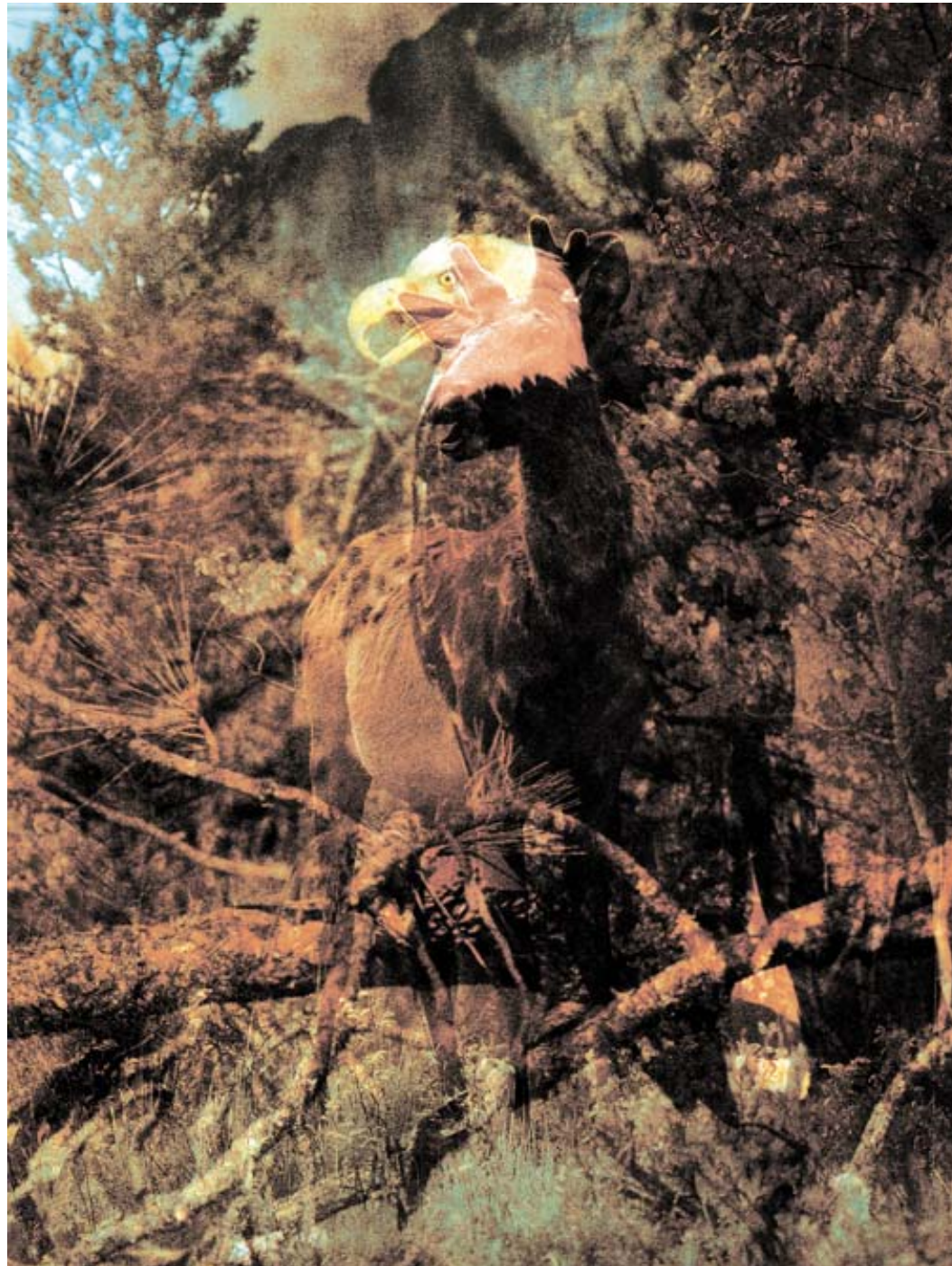
*On Travel 110* Rémy Markowitsch (2004)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 178 x 220 cm





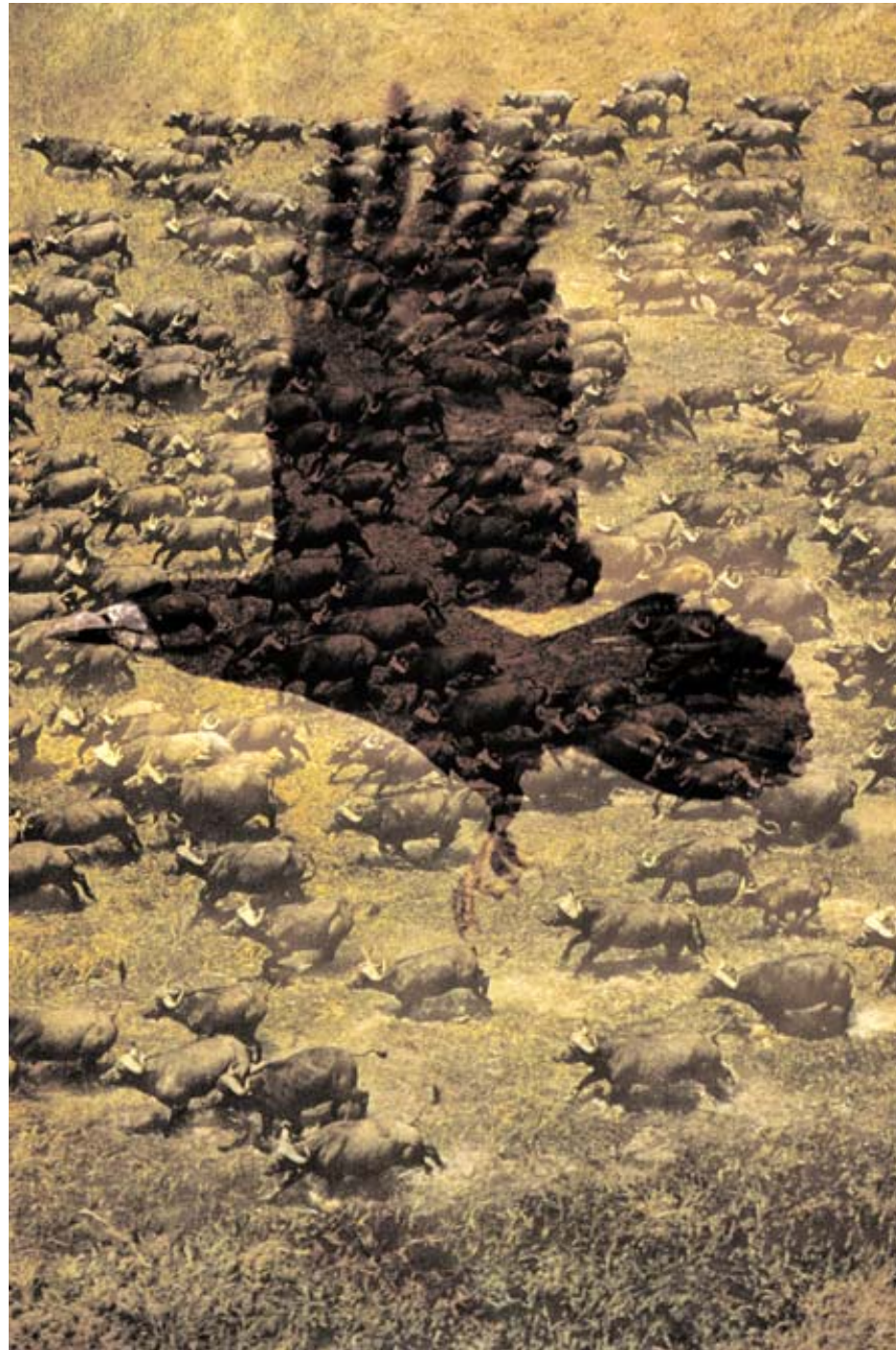
*On Travel 127* Rémy Markowitsch (2001)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 140 x 200 cm





*On Travel* 066 Rémy Markowitsch (2003)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 160 x 220 cm





*On Travel 127* Rémy Markowitsch (2002)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 170 x 220 cm





*On Travel 002* Rémy Markowitsch (2004)  
RC print, acrylic glass, wood 160 x 300 cm



Technical data about the works

On Travel, 1998–2004

Series. RC print, acrylic glass, wood. 178x178 cm/218x160-180 cm /160x240-300 cm.

On Travel: « Tristes Tropiques » 01-20, 2004

Series. RC print, glass, wood. 87x67 cm.

© for the photographs in « Tristes Tropiques » Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1955/2004

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Barley, 2004

Rémy Markowitsch in co-operation with Philipp von Matt, architect, Berlin, [www.phvm.com](http://www.phvm.com)

Installation. Wood material, paint, beer bottle, book, chicken claws. 226x226x306 cm.

Craftsmanship by: Schmid & Vollenweider, cabinetmakers, Lucerne

Chicken claws: mount prepared by Marcel Nyffenegger, [www.praeparator.ch](http://www.praeparator.ch)

[www.markowitsch.org](http://www.markowitsch.org)

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right page: BARLEY  
Installation view, Museum zu Allerheiligen, Kunstverein Schaffhausen, 2004. Interior view, detail: ceiling  
perforation (inspired by face paintings on photographs in: Lévi-Strauss, Claude, "Traurige Tropen).

Photo: Jürg Fausch



