

RÉMY MARKOWITSCH

Voltaire & Co.
1994-1995

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Edition: 3 (RC-Print, Aluminium, wood)

Shining through, fading

The phenomenon has a paradoxical effect: if too much ink is used for an illustration in a book, it creates an image on the back of the page that seems like a faded version of the original image, as though this coloured material shining through were already referring to a future condition. For every colour print does fade, slowly but steadily. An additional feature is the yellowing of the paper. Pale, monochrome pictures of the kind that Rémy Markowitsch has found in books evoke a number of ideas: old prints that can scarcely be made out any more, like that alleged body of Christ, or watermarks in fine paper, or disappearing drawings made in invisible ink or the back of poster drafts by François Dufêne, and not least of ghostly phenomena that survive as reverberations of an eerie event. Rémy Markowitsch used book illustrations of plants and people, including a portrait of Voltaire, for the series of pale images called *Voltaire & Co*, 1994. In Markowitsch's opinion, authors like Voltaire pushed ahead a certain way of thinking that also accelerated the production of books. It is said of Voltaire that his compilation of philosophical ideas, the *Philosophical Dictionary*, his most eclectic work, was so popular with his readers that it had to be reprinted seven times in the first two years, even though it was forbidden by the church - incredible success by the standards of the time. Four thousand copies of the second edition alone were sold within a week. Another literary portrait in this series that Markowitsch photographed and enlarged shows William Shakespeare, virtuoso of wordplay, master of effusive metaphor and inventive creator of dramatic situations. "Filmic handling of space and time, discontinuity in both media, 'dissolves' and 'interpolations' occur at every step", wrote Arnold Hauser on Shakespeare's plays.) Both literati are difficult for the viewer to identify in the pale images, which makes them into puzzling, mysterious manifestations.

"Emigrants" is the name used by Rudolf Borchardt for alpine plants in his book *Der leidenschaftliche Gärtner* (The Passionate Gardener), Frankfurt am Main 1992. He has a theory that no plant grows voluntarily in the inhospitable, hard world of the Alps. Wind and birds once transported flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees into these remote areas. And each of these often stunted plants has a relation in a more luxuriant version in regions with a more favourable climate. Markowitsch found several illustrations of these "emigrants" in a book of alpinists and used them for his series of pale images. For other works in this series of refined, subtle depictions he went back to illustrations of exquisite fruit, e.g. apples and pears. It struck the artist that they are always illustrated according to the same scheme in books: the fruit are always shown in pairs, and not in isolation, but hanging on a tree and with leaves and twigs twining around them. As in the case of the "Emigrants" the title *Am Schönsten zu zweit* (*Nicest with two*), 1994, gives the works a double meaning. It opens the image to a sexual interpretation, as a copulating couple.

Justin Hoffmann

in: *Finger im Buch*, Rémy Markowitsch, Cantz 1996

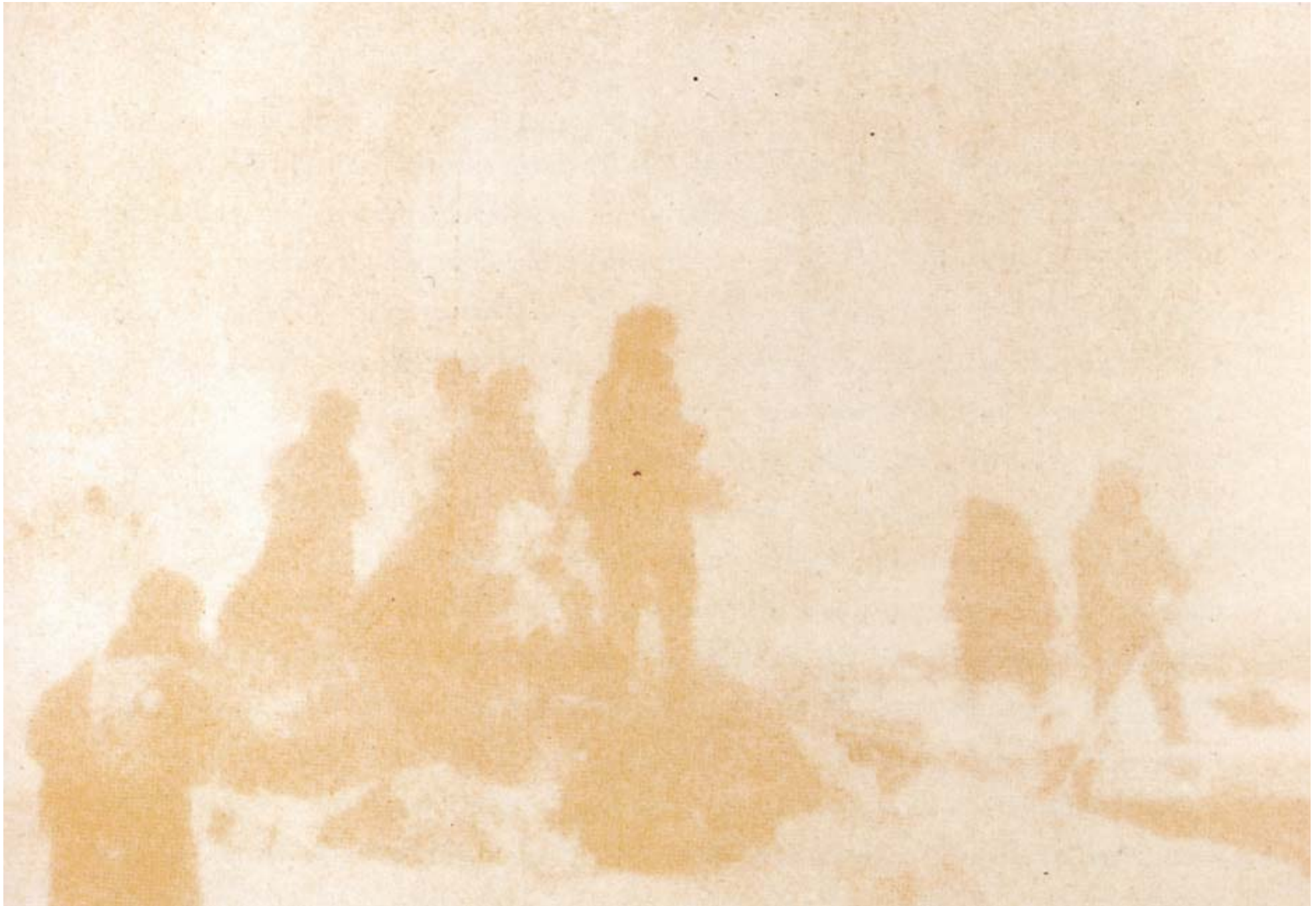
1 Arnold Hauser, *Der Ursprung der modernen Kunst und Literatur*, München 1979



Voltaire, 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 250x180 cm



Shakespeare, 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 250x180 cm



Travel Group , 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 177x251cm



Nicest with two, 1, 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 185x125 cm



Nicest with two, 2, 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 185x125 cm



Nicest with two, 3, 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 185x125 cm



Nicest with two, 2, 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 185x125 cm



Nicest with two, 5, 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 185x125 cm



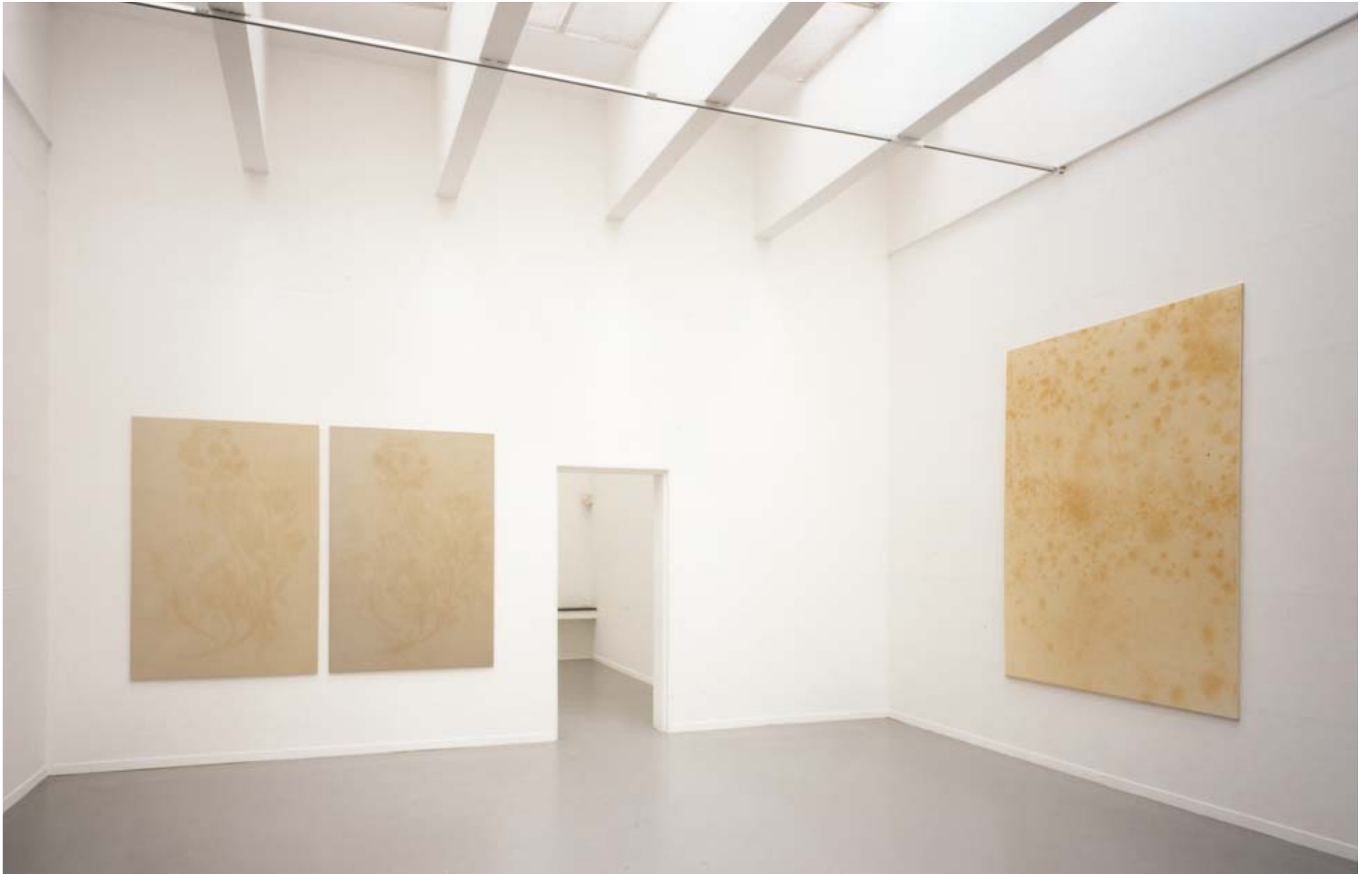
Nicest with two, 6, 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 185x125 cm



Emigrants 2, 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 155x130 cm



Emigrants, 3, 1994
RC-Print, Aluminium, wood, 155x130 cm



Emigrants 1 & 2, Voltaire,
Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1996



Travel Group, 1995 (l), Nicest with two, 2 und 4, 1994, (r)
Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1996

