

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

RÉMY MARKOWITSCH



FOR ERNA

YOU'RE NOT ALONE – OR ARE YOU?

RÉMY MARKOWITSCH'S WORK AT THE KIRCHNER MUSEUM DAVOS

Swiss artist Rémy Markowitsch has been invited as the second *Standpunkt* in the Kirchner Museum's series on contemporary art. Markowitsch has created a work entitled *you're not alone* that pertains indirectly to the artist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, his living environment and experience of life between 1923 and 1938, as well as the historical context of activity (museum/cultural space) and the connotations involved – not least the architecture of the Museum as a receptacle or symbol of cultural remembrance. The multimedia exhibition created by Markowitsch for the Kirchner Museum context is the first part of an exhibition trilogy: *you are not alone* (Vol.1 and Vol.2) to be shown at the Galleries Eigen + Art, Berlin, and Urs Meile, Lucerne, in 2004. Conceptually the presentation at the Kirchner Museum is also related to *On Travel*, an exhibition and book project to be shown at the *Museum zu Allerheiligen, Kunstverein Schaffhausen*, from September 2004: an example of Rémy Markowitsch's networking and networked projects.

The space entitled *you're not alone*, which refers to Kirchner's life as an outsider, delineates by association his years at the *Wildbodenhaus*, the last environment in which the artist lived and worked; in particular it examines the last few years of Kirchner's life, from 1932 onwards, influenced by the morphine derivate Eukodal. From this aspect Markowitsch's work can certainly be seen as a "temporary monument" to an artist whose art was intended to reflect life in general but who also staged – and only thus realised – his own life in art.

Kirchner's studio and sleeping area have been perfectly recreated to scale (rather than in perfect detail) in Room 4, the Museum's most hermetic space, using metal, plasterboard and wood as materials. This "room within the room" was created by Markowitsch in a renewed collaboration project with the architect Philipp von Matt (following *Home is where the heart is*; Eigen + Art Gallery, Berlin 1999). The onlooker sees a box (in fact "stronghold" or "cage" might be a more appropriate term) positioned in such a way as to replicate the topographic orientation of the original room at the

Wildbodenhaus. The impression created by the outer structural design with its outward facing C-profiles and grey, uncoated plasterboards, is stolid, almost martial in its deterrent effect. As the entrance to the room is situated to the rear, the visitor at first feels challenged by this "spiky" corpus no larger than himself, and has to overcome his threshold inhibitions and "dare" to venture around the room.

The exhibition walls of the room itself remain empty; yet the very absence of masterpieces expected by the visitor refers to the environment in which they are created: the confined studio. Yet colour on the walls there is. Blue-violet fluorescent tubes (Osram type L-58W-67-BLAU-T8) are inserted into the sky loft above the exhibition space, casting and colouring the walls with a cool blue tone that drains the warm tones of the wooden floor as well as all other colours, particularly the skin tones of the visitors. As a blue hue it causes the concrete floor of the connecting hall to shimmer. In the evenings, when the blinds are half open, the Museum's architecture is thus highlighted, "radiating into the public space" as it were. From July to October a romantic yet detached light shines between three cubes glowing white and yellow – an illumination directed not at kitsch but at perception, in keeping with Arthur Rimbaud. The colour of the lighting itself is a reference to the "preventive" lighting used in public places in the hope of preventing drug addicts from finding their veins: It is a subtle reference to the aura of tragedy ascribed to the fate of many an artist; remarkably, it also alludes to a colour tone that resonates in many of Kirchner's landscape paintings, a tone between red and blue which, like light itself, cannot be captured in words.

The studio or projection room consists of a White Cube panelled in wood as was the original room, its floor painted the colour of bull's blood – in imitation of the coloured frame Kirchner used for his hand-made chairs and also by way of reference to Markowitsch's earlier works (for instance the Berlin exhibition in 1999 mentioned above). Inside the room a two-part DVD film digitally produced by Markowitsch and based exclusively on Kirchner's photographs, self-portraits, studio scenes, landscape views, etc., is projected onto the wall opposite the entrance. The large projection surface is proportional to the room's dimensions, as if a painter were to create a painting that never again is to leave the room. The visitor is literally in the picture; the dimensions of the room and the projection are such that his shadow obscures the image so that he is in the film in silhouette,

attaching his own presence to that which is seemingly long past, suppressed and forgotten.

Then there is the room's acoustics and sound backdrop, which becomes audible the moment the "studio door" is opened. The underlying soundtrack for the film is David Bowie's *Rock 'n' Roll Suicide*, a reference (according to the musician himself) to the author of *Paradis artificiels* (1860), Charles Baudelaire. It was the first line of the song's final chorus, *you're not alone*, that gave the multimedia intervention its title. Markowitsch used his own vinyl record as the source for the digitalised music, a biographical detail that also refers to the "passage of time", to cultural products that are used and become used. The clicking of the record's lead-out groove marks the film's "end credits": a rushing list of now renowned artists, men and women of letters, etc., of the modern age whose lives were influenced positively or negatively by "intoxicants" – and who like Kirchner were seldom alone in their quest for ecstasy or tranquillity.

The eye and ear witness who sees the combination of images that are as such static yet in movement and moving; who hears the sounds; and who perceives the pervading presence of the blue light – that witness directly experiences living spaces and fantasy spaces – not just Kirchner's, not just artists' but indubitably also the mirror image of his own experiences and perceptions. The meditative production, which has to be experienced over time, which is aimed at both the intellect and the emotions, addresses the subjective living space of Kirchner himself within the field of tension of his own sphere of activity, namely the museum which always both materialises and mystifies art; it also conjures up a wide array of associations: the way in which we now approach artists' biographies, cultural traditions, social taboos, and the way in which future generations respond to uncompromising artistic standpoints that alternate between self-determination and self-destruction.

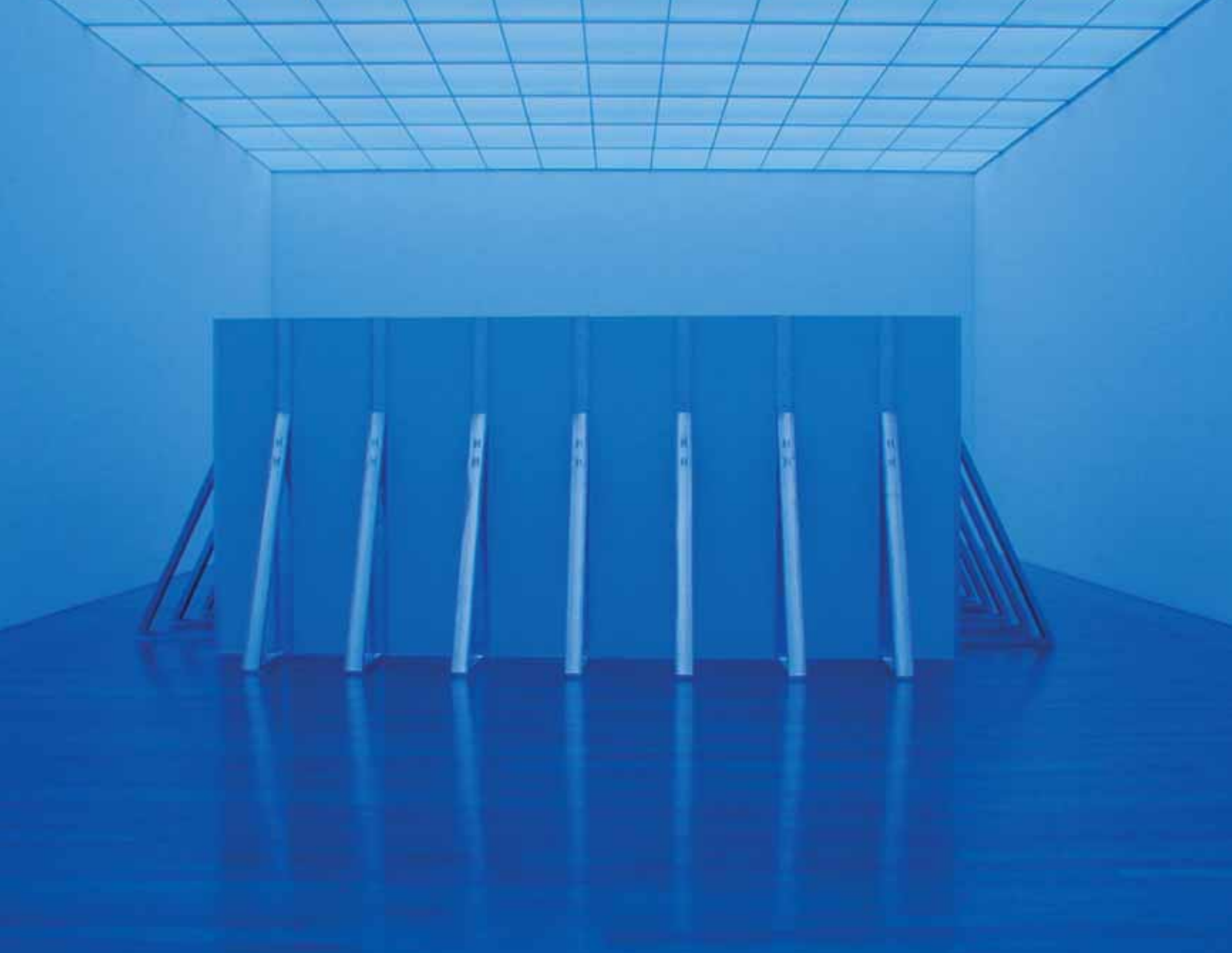
Markowitsch's installation affords many vantage points in concrete terms and many perspectives in intellectual terms, and rather than give simple answers it raises questions about our understanding of artistic work, the way in which oeuvre and biography are linked, the way in which the excessive lifestyles of "culture makers" are posthumously romanticised while everyday drug addiction is criminalised, and so on; it also wonders how the properties of subjective perception(s) characterised by

all manner of thrills and experiences can be rendered objective. This intertwining of general social references with references to art history is dissolved with equal justification in the installation itself, and the aesthetic experience often equated with a detached or even distancing attitude can thus be translated into a direct experience that reflects our own reality, which is not remote.

Through reduction in material terms Markowitsch gains an openness through visual overlays and semantic interplays which for all its intricacy is never random or impersonal. Rather it is an invitation to a discursive conversation that one might refer to as an "opening of doors", and depending on one's disposition that discourse could well drift into vagueness; nonetheless it is regularly reined back in, to the core issue: the supposed isolation of the individual, whether voluntary (out of inner necessity) or imposed (by pressure from the outside).

In Markowitsch's work this "opening up" to other levels of meaning emerges as a side effect of concentration, isolation or confinement. There is a detail of the overall structure which is initially inconspicuous but in fact encapsulates all the tension that isolated life can develop towards the outside world (as a result not least of personal determination and subsequent mystifications): the screws threaded from the inside out, against all logic of workmanship, their tips piercing the plasterboard and metal, injuring and ripping the skin of the room as they project angrily into the room. Like a rose the studio's sheath defends itself against contact as beauty wards off penetration. The connection or proximity between destruction and creativity, not just in the aesthetic "world", becomes clear to see, like a "bulwark of creativity": outwardly impregnable yet inwardly injured and hurting.

Roland Scotti









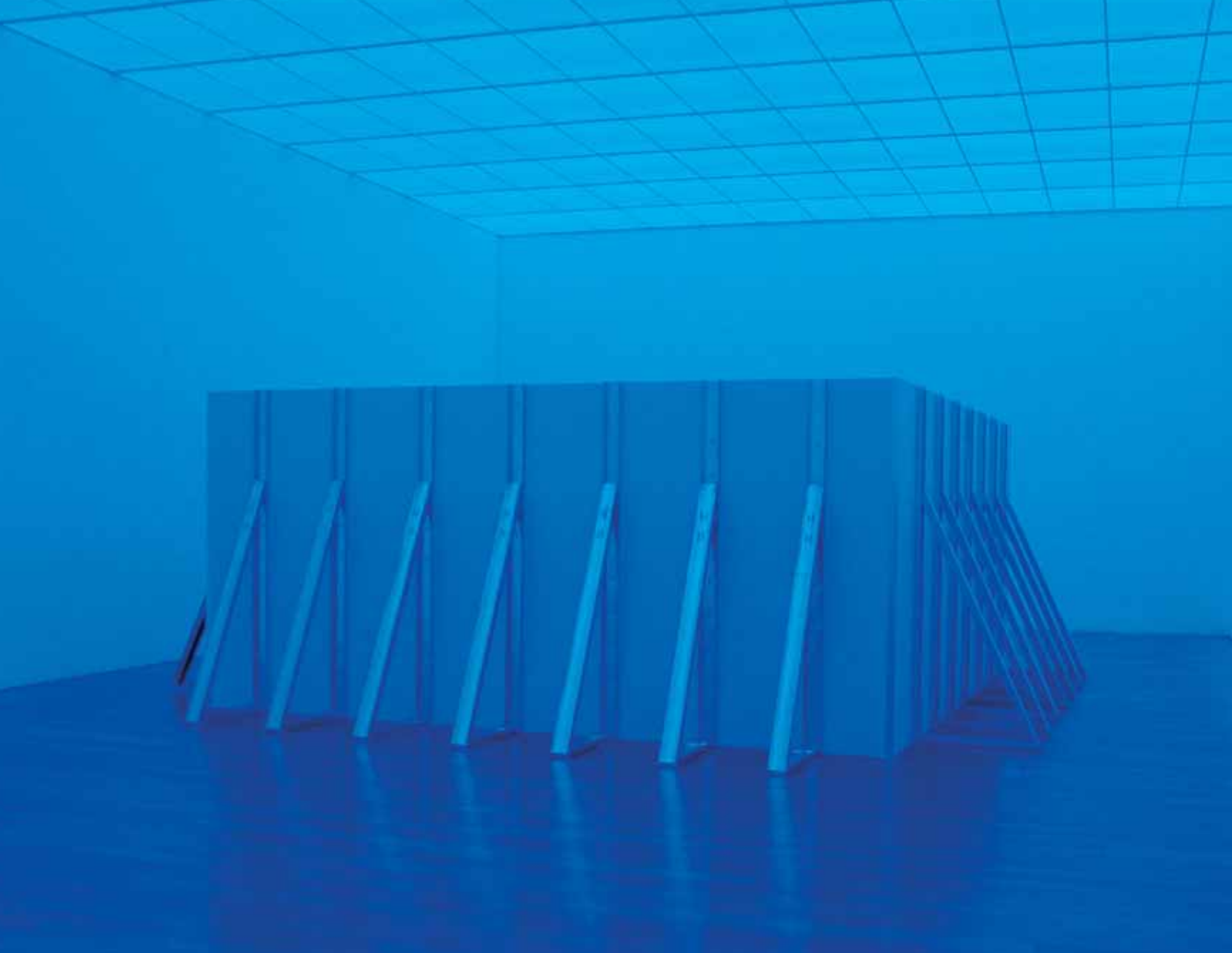






Louis Armstrong Antonin Artaud H.C. Artmann Wystan Hugh Auden Johann Sebastian Bach Ginger Baker
Emmy Ball-Hennings Honoré de Balzac Elizabeth Barrett-Browning Jean-Michel Basquiat Georges Bataille
Charles Baudelaire Walter Benjamin Hector Berlioz Sarah Bernhardt David Bowie T.C.Boyle Lenny Bruce
Charles Bukowski William S.Burroughs Lord Byron Lewis Carrol Louis-Ferdinand Céline Raymond Chandler
Winston Churchill Eric Clapton Kurt Cobain Jean Cocteau Samuel Taylor Coleridge David Crosby Aleister Crowley
Miles Davis Salvador Dali Robert Desnos Charles Dickens Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Isadora Duncan Marguerite Duras
Thomas Alva Edison Hans Fallada Rainer Werner Fassbinder William Faulkner Peter Fonda Sigmund Freud
Serge Gainsbourg Jerry Garcia Theophile Gautier Jean Genet Mary Godwin Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
Cary Grant George Harrison Martin Heidegger Heinrich Heine Ernest Hemingway Margaux Hemingway Jimi Hendrix
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Novalis Ozzy Osborne Charley Parker Pablo Picasso Pitigrilli Edgar Allen Poe Jackson Pollock Cole Porter
Elvis Presley Marcel Proust Thomas de Quincey Lou Reed Keith Richards Arthur Rimbaud Franklin Delano Roosevelt
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Stevenson Igor Strawinsky Elizabeth Taylor Francis Thompson Tito Ernst Toller Georg Trakl Vincent van Gogh
Paul Verlaine Jules Verne Voltaire Tom Waits Andy Warhol Tom Wedgewood



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Rémy Markowitsch, Berlin 2004

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