

YOU ARE NOT ALONE VOL. 1 & 2 (2004) Rémy Markowitsch



»Wirklich, sagte der Apotheker, man sollte hart gegen die Trunksucht vorgehen! Wenn es nach mir ginge, würde man jede Woche an der Rathausstür auf einer Tafel ad hoc die Namen all derer eintragen, die sich während der Woche mit Alkohol vergiftet haben. Man hätte dann übrigens auch, was die Statistik betrifft, jährliche Beweise, die man bei Bedarf ... Aber entschuldigen Sie.«

'Really,' remarked the apothecary, 'severe sanctions should be imposed in cases of drunkenness. I'd like to have posted, weekly, on a special notice board on the door of the Town Hall, a list of the names of all those who, during the preceding week, had been intoxicated by alcohol. Besides, from the statistical point of view, such a list would provide a sort of public record which, should the occasion ever arise ... Excuse me.'

En vérité, dit l'apothicaire, on devrait bien sévir contre l'ivresse ! Je voudrais que l'on inscrivit, hebdomadairement, à la porte de la mairie, sur un tableau ad hoc, les noms de tous ceux qui, durant la semaine, se seraient intoxiqués avec des alcools. D'ailleurs, sous le rapport de la statistique, on aurait là comme des annales patentes qu'on irait au besoin ... Mais excusez.

Gustave Flaubert Madame Bovary

The history of drugs is as old as the history of mankind. For centuries man has used drugs as food, remedies and offerings, as stimulants at religious gatherings and to communicate, and as mood-enhancing and mood-altering substances. Moreover the handling and possession of drugs has always been caught in the field of tension between use and abuse, between social acceptance and government ban. Legislature makes a distinction between legal and illegal drugs. Alcohol for instance is a socially accepted, legal drug in Germany, as it is in Switzerland. It is integrated into western European society, and fulfils a number of roles as something consumed in society for stimulation and enjoyment as well as a "sedative" in times of worry, anxiety or stress.

Alcohol was recently on the front page of Berlin's Zitty magazine (15/2004). Under the heading "One for the road" it listed a number of hard facts on the "Berlin people's drug of choice": Indeed 25,000 people in Berlin are addicted to alcohol; every day 500 Berlin hospital beds are taken up as the result of the chronic consumption of alcohol; every week 120,000 crates of beer are sold at Getränke Hoffmann; and 200 litres of draught beer are consumed during an average party evening at Kaffee Burger (bottled beer excluded); and so on and so forth.

The exhibition you are not alone Vol. 1 by Swiss artist Rémy Markowitsch, who lives in Berlin, directly addresses the issue of alcohol. The artist has barricaded the entire display window of the Berlin EIGEN + ART Gallery with a wall or rampart of more than a thousand empty wine bottles. This wall of bottles separates the space outside from the space inside, the public space from the Gallery's space. Passers-by have no way of seeing into the Gallery, so to see the works on display they are forced to enter the Gallery. On show inside, among the subdued lighting created by the green wine bottles, are two video works. A projection that fills an entire wall shows people on the street: Women and men, dressed up, on the way back from a party, a club or perhaps a bar, in varying stages of inebriation, staggering slightly under the effect of alcohol or high heels; night life in Liverpool. The scenes are filmed from a window, with the effect that as onlookers we are detached from the events unfolding on the wall, a voyeur's vantage point. And yet the longer we watch the projection, the more familiar the scenes begin to appear.

In the middle of this projected promenade is a flat screen in which a strange figure with a white bast parasol, sunglasses and red cap moves in the wind against a backdrop of a bright blue sky. At the same time we hear a tirade on the consumption of alcohol, in German, then in English or in French. Monsieur Homais, the apothecary in Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary, who supplies Emma Bovary

with medicines and literature, is ranting on about a drunken coachman and the unregulated consumption of alcohol, which, were he to have his way, ought to be denounced publicly. The apothecary as an institution exercises power and control over drugs, and condemns unregulated "street drugs". In singling out this novel the artist has purposely chosen a work of world literature which at the time triggered the most heated of debates, and resulted in a lawsuit being brought against the author, who was accused of "literally having created poison". Madame Bovary is a work of fiction about the hazards of fictions consumed as a replacement, as a substitute for an "active" life, and causing hallucinations. The excerpt quoted with Monsieur Homais refers, on the one hand, to the connection between "literature, addiction and mania" (Avital Ronell) and, on the other, to the way in which the drug problem is inextricably linked with modern government methods of control.

In the room at the back of the Gallery Markowitsch has placed a large refrigerator from which visitors are invited to help themselves. As at any vernissage there are of course alcoholic drinks. Entirely in keeping with the motto of you are not alone, written large on to and into the wall in traditional root-wood corkscrews, visitors are welcome to treat themselves to a glass, and then commit themselves to posterity on the wall. What emerges is a sort of roll of honour, a hall of fame – perhaps even a letter of confession. What was initially achieved simply by guiding the onlooker's gaze then becomes apparent. The artist places the onlooker in the middle of a complex scenario of techniques of exclusion and inclusion.

This theme is to be found in various guises in the series of exhibitions all entitled you are not alone, inspired by the first line of the final chorus of the song Rock 'n' Roll Suicide by David Bowie, a reference (according to the musician himself) to the author of Paradis artificiels (1860), Charles Baudelaire. Two other exhibitions, one in Lucerne and one at the Kirchner Museum Davos, are being staged at the same time as the Berlin exhibition. For the Kirchner Museum context Markowitsch was invited to create a number of works which relate indirectly to the artist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, his life as an outsider, his living environment and his experience of life, and in particular his addiction to the morphine derivative Eukodal.

If intoxication and the experience of drugs are seen as an imaginary journey, Markowitsch's exhibition and book project On Travel, which documents the outcome of his expeditions into the inner sanctum of travel and photography books, is linked conceptually to you are not alone. Indeed the artist offers a miniaturised look at and insight into the parallel exhibition with his Multiple Barley, which sits regally on top of the refrigerator in the "Bar" room and casts an atmospheric, ornament-like light pattern onto the ceiling. The idea for the Barley installation (2004), a type of modernistic primeval hut whose original takes up an entire room, was conceived of in co-operation with the architect Philipp von Matt, Berlin, and is taken from Nigel Barley's "notes from a mud hut" entitled The Innocent Anthropologist. In his story Barley turns the "usual" view of things on its head:

the white, starkly naked square structure on whose roof stands an empty beer bottle is the African view of a “white man’s” dwelling. Besides Barley an important part of the exhibition and book is taken up with a collection of photographic and textual finds from literary and scientific travelogues. The artist uses the collection virtually as a foundation to underpin the Multiple. In a way similar to you are not alone Markowitsch addresses here the issue of the onlooker’s viewpoint, and raises it as a topic. At the same time he playfully deconstructs the “white traveller’s” perspective, his encounters with “that which is foreign”, and re-situates the tope of the tropics within the traveller himself. And just as intoxication is seen as an imaginary journey, the practice of travelling can also be regarded as “intoxicating”, as a drug.

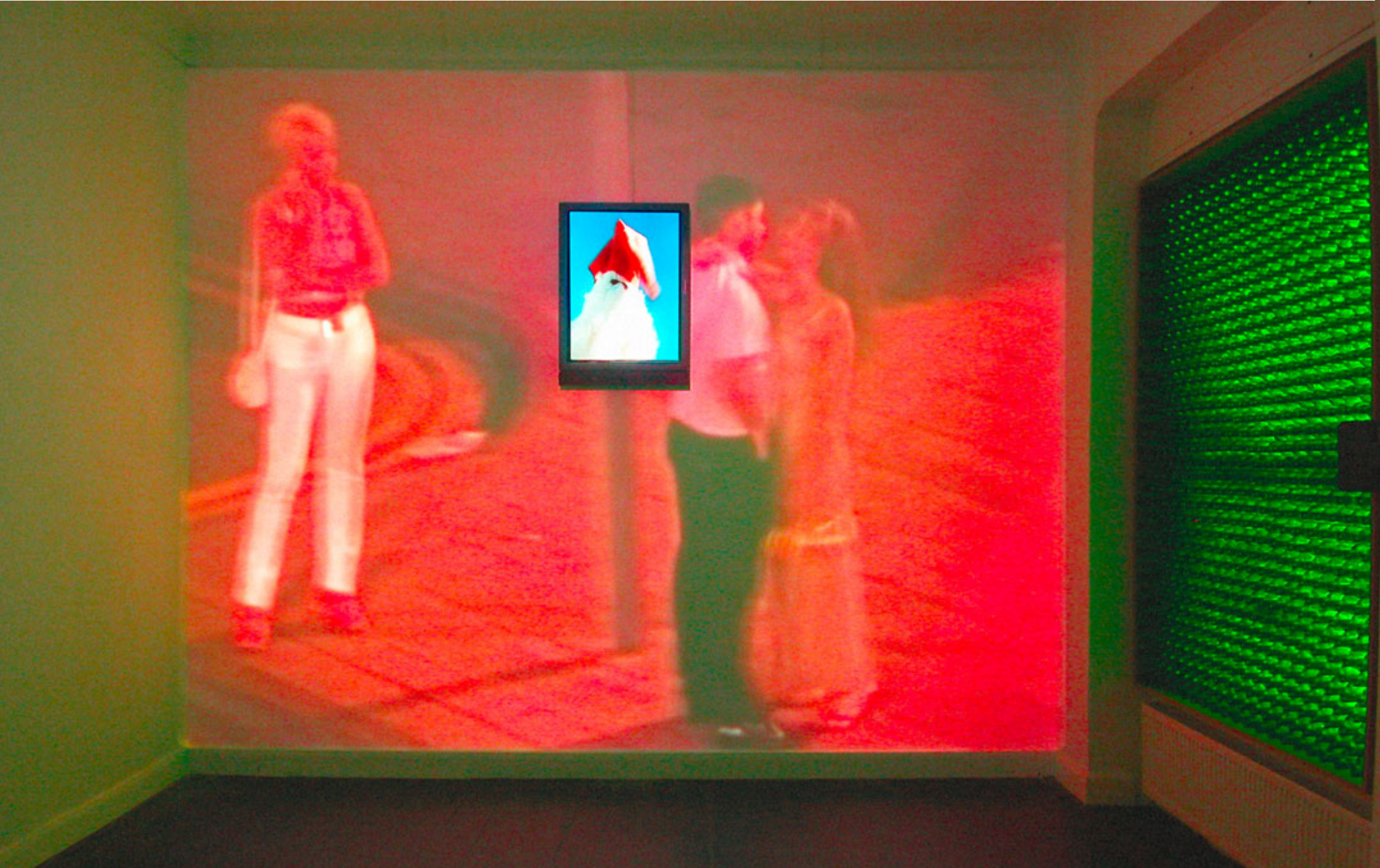
Antje Weitzel

Translator: Stephen B. Grynwasser, for APOSTROPH AG, Translations, Lucerne

* Kirchner Museum Davos: s. pdf: you are not alone

** Barley: s. pdf: ON TRAVEL





YOU ARE NOT ALONE VOL. 1 Rémy Markowitsch Galerie EIGEN + ART, Berlin 2004
Mixed Media Installation mit/with Flatscreen, DVD "Homais", Projection, DVD "Liver" und/and Bordeauxflaschen/Bordeauxbottles

Foto: Uwe Walter, Berlin



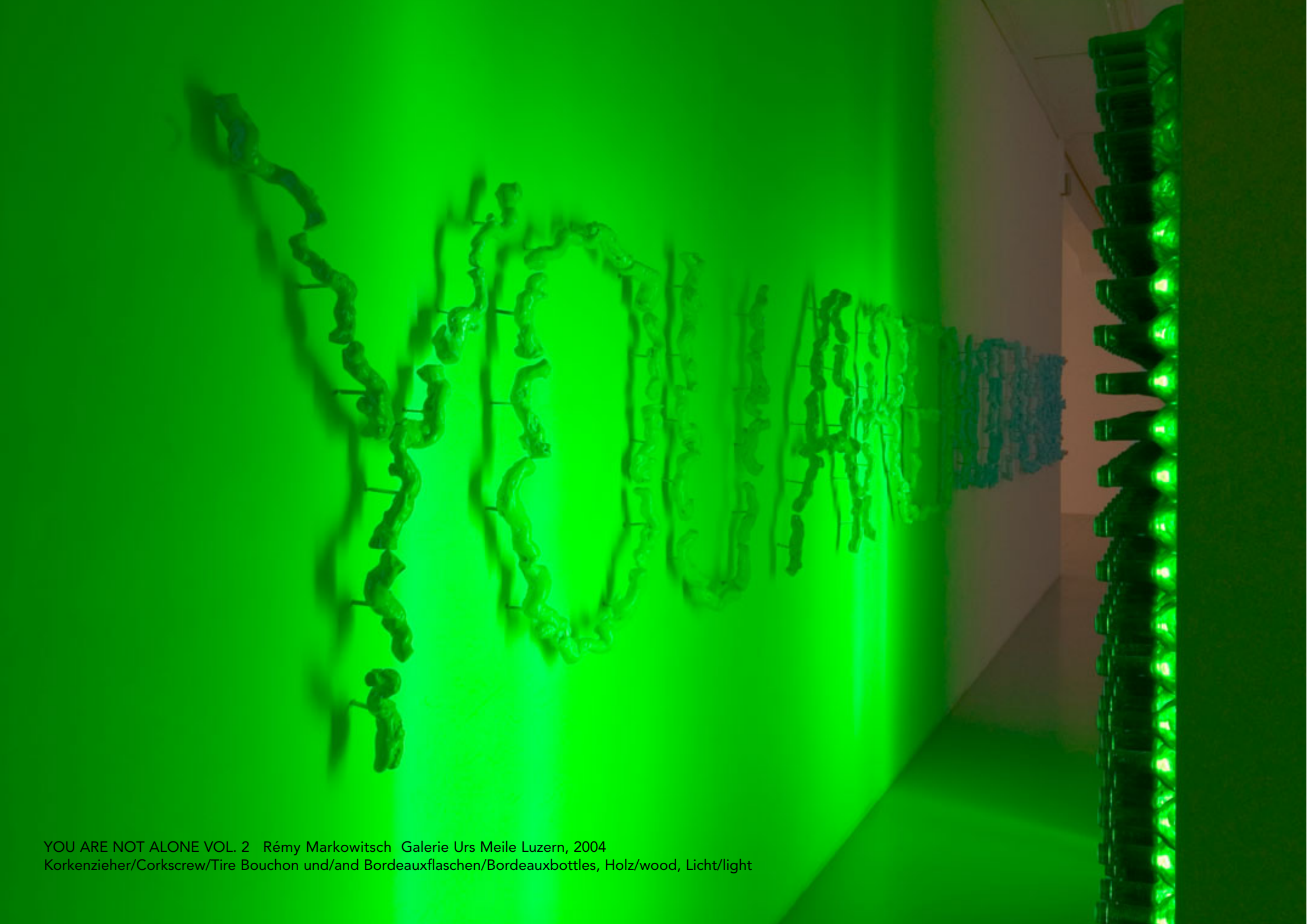
YOU ARE NOT ALONE VOL. 1 Rémy Markowitsch Galerie EIGEN + ART, Berlin 2004
Fenster/window mit/with Bordeauxflaschen/Bordeauxbottles

Foto: Uwe Walter, Berlin

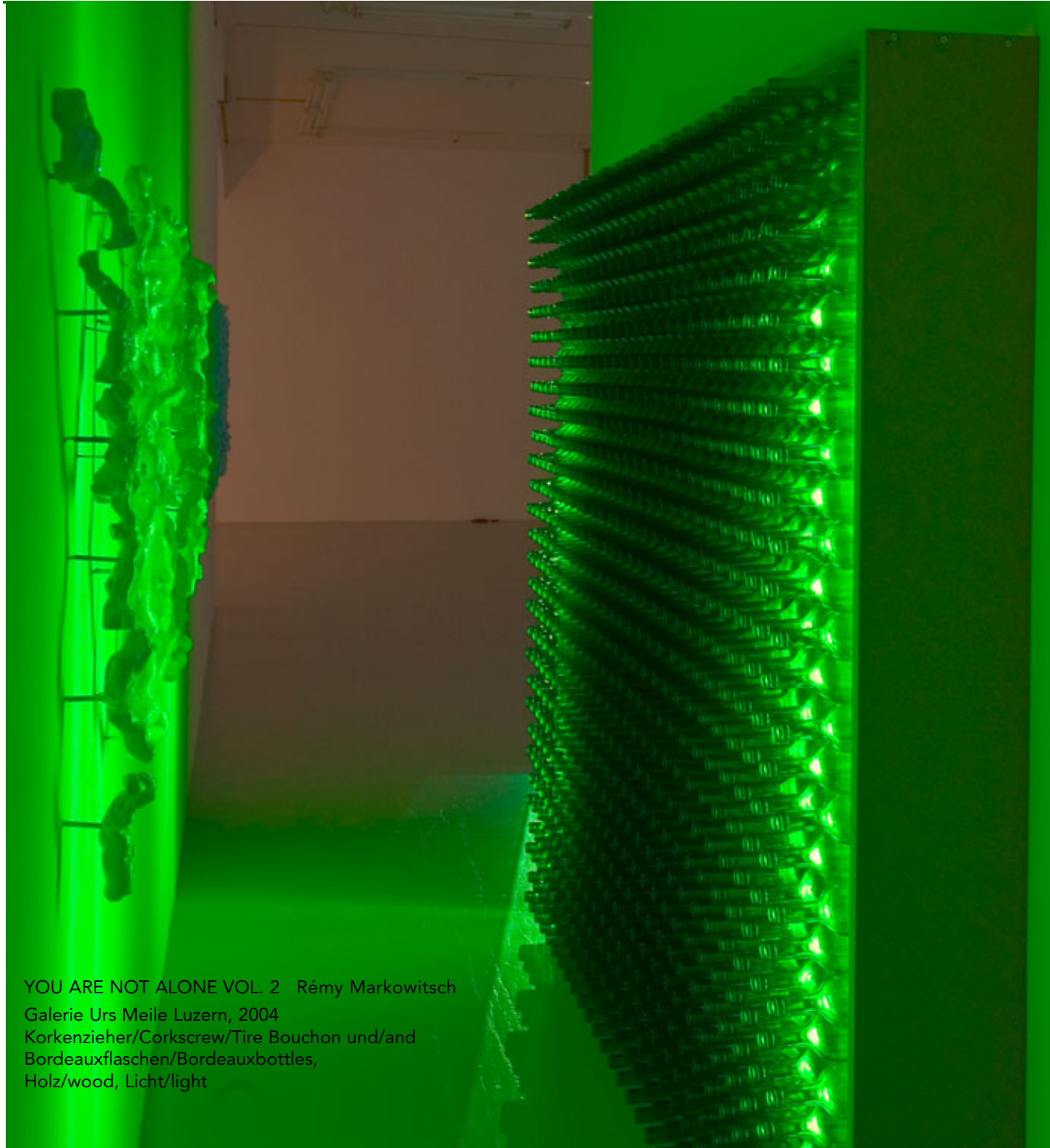


YOU ARE NOT ALONE VOL. 1 Rémy Markowitsch Galerie EIGEN + ART, Berlin 2004
Korkenzieher/Corkscrew/Tire Bouchon

Foto: Uwe Walter, Berlin



YOU ARE NOT ALONE VOL. 2 Rémy Markowitsch Galerie Urs Meile Luzern, 2004
Korkenzieher/Corkscrew/Tire Bouchon und/and Bordeauxflaschen/Bordeauxbottles, Holz/wood, Licht/light



YOU ARE NOT ALONE VOL. 2 Rémy Markowitsch
Galerie Urs Meile Luzern, 2004
Korkenzieher/Corkscrew/Tire Bouchon und/and
Bordeauxflaschen/Bordeauxbottles,
Holz/wood, Licht/light

YOU ARE NOT ALONE (Vol. 1&2) 2004
Installation (Mixed Media)

HOMASIS
(DVD, 2004, 1/3)
Loop 03.30

Sprecher/Speakers:
Joe Murray, Liverpool
Stefan Richter, Berlin
David Letellier, Berlin

Soundediting: Hanspeter Dommann, Luzern

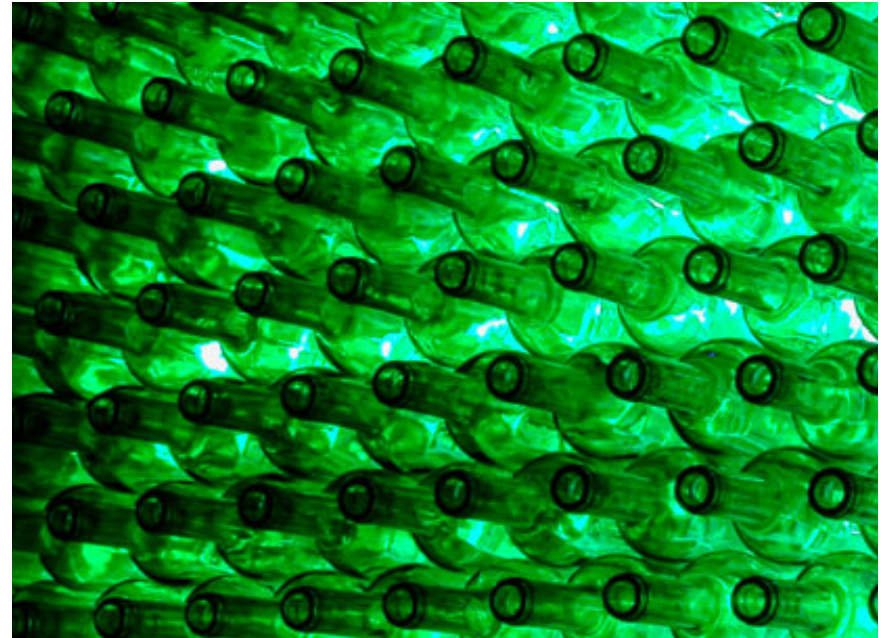
LIVER
(DVD, 2004)
Loop 26:43

Quellennachweis/List of sources

Deutsch/german:
Gustave Flaubert Madame Bovary Sitten in der Provinz
neu übersetzt von Cornelia Hasting
Copyright 2001 by HAFFMANN'S VERLAG AG Zürich
(ISBN 3 251 20203 0)

Englisch/english:
Gustave Flaubert Madame Bovary Provincial Manners
a new translation by Margaret Mauldon
Oxford World's Classics
Copyright 2004 by OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
(Library of Congress: 0- 19-284039-8)

Französisch/french:
Flaubert Madame Bovary
LE LIVRE DE POCHE classique
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Rémy Markowitsch wird vertreten durch/is represented by:
Galerie EIGEN + ART, Berlin / Leipzig, www.eigen-art.com
Galerie Urs Meile, Luzern, www.galerie-meile.ch

Weitere Informationen zur Arbeit des Künstlers unter/For more informations
on the artist and his work visit:
www.markowitsch.org

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