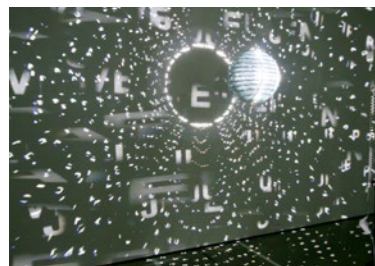


With this installation, Mischa Kuball attempts to make the incomprehensible and inconceivable nature of our universe tangible. At the same time, he alludes to the development of human knowledge, in the course of which, especially since the Enlightenment, humans have become space travelers—first via the telescope and later in reality. Furthermore, he juxtaposes the classical metaphor of light and the idea of enlightened thinking with the experience of social and political spaces.



five planets, 2015

public preposition (Materialsammlung), since 2009

[This part of the exhibition will open in June.]

Under what conditions does public sphere come into being? What is public space based on, and how does it react when art intervenes in it? Mischa Kuball takes up these and other questions with his works, interventions and performances in public space, and provides answers. For many years now, he has been using his projects to explore the interaction between art, the public sphere, and place. In 2015, the comprehensive collection of material *public preposition* was published in the form of a book.

The *public preposition* series, developed since 2009, investigates public spaces and human actions within them, questions our perception of ostensibly familiar environments, and creates moments of irritation. Mischa Kuball has worked in this context in, among other places, Venice, Marfa (Texas), Toronto, Bern, Katowice, Christchurch, Thessaloniki, Berlin, Jerusalem, Sydney, and Boston. The works *Marfa Floater* and *Berlin Floater* presented in this exhibition were also originally conceived for (semi) public spaces.



public preposition (Materialsammlung), seit 2009

Mischa Kuball understands the public space as a space for the critical thinking of each individual and as a designable area for numerous protagonists. In this sense, his works question the generally accepted notion of the public sphere, its conditions, as well as its degree of democracy. Each work is based on a precise analysis of its

planned and actual location and refers to the respective conditions and particularities of public space. Kuball places the project in question there where it creates meaning.

The ongoing character of *public prepositions* as an open project series creates the possibility of developing new works or publications from the documentation of projects. Individual projects, which Mischa Kuball does not understand as completed works, can be presented and reinstalled not only within the framework of an exhibition; his concept also provides for re-staging them in the urban environment of the exhibiting institutions, modifying them and developing them further site-specifically.

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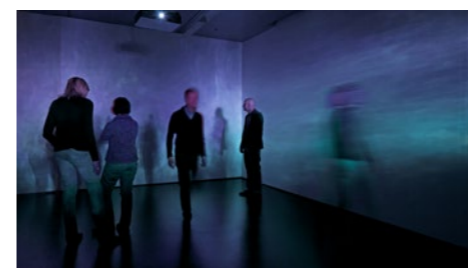
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Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday
11 am – 6 pm

Mischa Kuball ReferenzRäume

It is above all powerful interventions in public spaces, such as a high-rise transformed into a light sign or a glaringly illuminated synagogue, which have earned the conceptual artist Mischa Kuball (b. 1959) international recognition. With his installations, performances, photographs, and projections, Kuball explores urban spaces, architectural structures, and social patterns of perception. In doing so, he pursues a network philosophy that transcends space and time. Mischa Kuball's works address the increasingly topical question of the distinction between appearance or image and reality. He challenges what an image can be and how it can be produced and differentiates between reality and the possibilities of its reproduction. The exhibition and publication project *ReferenceSpaces* offers for the first time a retrospective cross-section of Mischa Kuball's artistic work from the last three decades.



platon's mirror, 2011

The variety of concrete themes and the spectrum of stagings of the works presented at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg ranges from Plato's cave to Galileo's stars. They present a selection of Mischa Kuball's fundamental, artistically implemented ideas. Especially his large-scale installations reveal how the use of light in his work is always connected with the reflection of social, philosophical, political, and (natural) scientific questions.

platon's mirror, 2011

The idea behind the work *platon's mirror* is based on Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, one of the most influential texts in European literature. In the allegory conceived by the Greek philosopher Plato, who lived in the fifth to fourth centuries BC, a distinction is made between two forms of reality: the visible or alleged reality and the true reality.

In Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, those trapped in a cave see only the shadows of things protruding above a wall behind them. The prisoners are bound facing the wall onto which the shadows are projected. Since they have spent their entire lives in the cave, the shadows are perceived as real. One day, one person is able to free himself from his imprisonment in the cave. He sees daylight and

at first does not understand what reality is. Only with time does habituation set in and the person understands that the shadows in the cave are only one part of reality. If he had to go back there, he would no longer recognize anything, and the other prisoners would make fun of his findings and think he was crazy.

The *Allegory of the Cave* is about humankind's knowledge and lack thereof. Through a better understanding of the so-called theory of ideas, consciousness is awakened. Consciousness is the ability of a human being to recognize and contemplate the external world with all his or her senses. By projecting a video onto silver foil, Mischa Kuball constructs a space that is analogous to Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*. Much like the shadows in Plato's cave, only reflections can be perceived here. Forms emerge and change in various rhythms. What is projected is, however, not tangible. They are plays of light that cannot be clearly interpreted—like reflections of reality.

broca Re:Mix, 2007

Countless letters and numbers are thrown onto the walls by means of six projectors rotating at different speeds. They encourage the viewer to bring them into a context of meaning, which, however, cannot succeed, since their appearance is subject to a random principle.

The sculptural elements in the space represent the artist's digitized brain waves, transferred into three-dimensional forms, which were measured while he imagined the letters of the alphabet. In the title of the work, Mischa Kuball alludes to the corresponding area in the cerebral cortex: Named after the French surgeon Paul Broca (1824–1880), Broca's area is a region in the cerebral cortex where the capacity for language is formed.

In this installation, Mischa Kuball investigates the complex system between language formation and writing.



broca Re:Mix, 2007

Thus, the grasping, expressing, and representing of thoughts as a precursor to communication are combined on different levels. Visitors are actively involved in this process by instinctively trying to combine the signs, and

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search for words and contents via the individual letters. Nevertheless, the random principle underlying the appearance of the signs thwarts this endeavor.

platon's mirror_image apparatus_ct_blitz, 2011

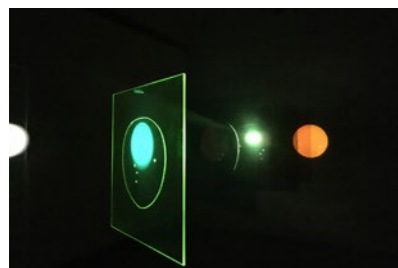
Mischa Kuball initially conducted research on his brain in a private radiology practice without any artistic ambitions; a few years later, he placed image-producing apparatuses in a computer tomograph (CT). During a medical X-ray procedure, all metallic objects are normally set aside, since otherwise the X-ray beam would be deflected by the metal, and the X-ray image would be disturbed by "flashes of light." Mischa Kuball uses precisely these interferences by using a CT to create numerous black-and-white prints of imaging equipment such as photo and film cameras, lenses, and projectors. The metal contained in the technical objects produces unpredictable and unique light traces, called artifacts, that "disrupt" the X-ray images. They are images that cannot be repeated. The work is related to the installation *platon's mirror*. Both works deal with unexpected appearances and what is not visible. The result, which changes with each photograph, raises the question of reality and its reproducibility.



platon's mirror_image apparatus_ct_blitz, 2011

five suns / after Galileo, 2018

The idea of the installation *five suns / after Galileo* is based on one of the most important astronomical discoveries made by the Italian universal scholar Galileo Galilei (1564–1641). Between 1610 and 1611, Galileo discovered dark, moving, and changing spots on the surface of the sun with the help of a telescope, which he refined. Furthermore, he found that the Milky Way consists of innumerable stars, and that four moons orbit the planet Jupiter. He discovered that Venus shows light phases as we know them from the moon and concluded from it that it must orbit around the sun, not around the Earth. Galileo was not yet able to clearly process his observations, but they supported the heliocentric world view described by Nicolaus Copernicus, which had not yet been proven at that time.



five suns / after Galileo, 2018

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) was a physician and astronomer. In 1543, he described a view of the world in which the sun is considered the resting center of the

universe, and the Earth is a planet that rotates on its own axis and also moves around the sun like the other planets. This conception of the world is known as the heliocentric world view. This contradicted the dogmas of the Christian Church, which regarded the Earth as a disk and the center of the universe.

With the reference to Galileo, Mischa Kuball opens up a new sphere of experience in his staging. The light directed onto five rotating, colored discs creates fascinating chromatic effects in the space and makes the viewers think not only about light as such but also as a medium of truth and knowledge.

Magazin des 20. Jahrhunderts, 1989/90

What one sees at first is a black metal filing cabinet with four drawers. Until just a few years ago, such filing cabinets could be found in many offices, representing an established structure of order. The four open drawers of the cabinet exhibited here each contain one slide projector filled with eighty-one slides. Each slide depicts a work of art from the collections of famous museums. The images of the selected artworks, which are considered significant, exemplify the canon of art from various cultures.



Magazin des 20. Jahrhunderts, 1989/90

The asynchronously alternating images result in ever new constellations that give rise to the most diverse associations. The numerous new constellations each generate further contexts and insights. Thus, especially today, the question arises as to which images are not part of the fixed canon and why they are excluded from an established order.

research_desk_Nolde/Kritik/Kuball, 2020

Emil Nolde (1867–1956) is not only considered one of the great painters of German Expressionism, but also one of the most ambivalent German artists of the last century. The free use of color and striking forms, as well as the dissolution of traditional perspective, are characteristic of his work and Expressionist painting in general.

Emil Nolde's works corresponded neither to the aesthetics nor to the ideology of the National Socialists and were defamed as "degenerate." After the Second World War, with the help of renowned art historians, the painter stylized himself as a victim of the National Socialists, despite the fact that Nolde was a member of the Nazi Party and an avowed anti-Semite. It is only through research in recent years that new findings have come to public attention and changed the view of both his person and his artistic work.



research_desk_Nolde/Kritik/Kuball, 2020

With the work *research_desk_Nolde/Kritik/Kuball*, Mischa Kuball critically examines the person and work of Emil Nolde. The perspective on Nolde's works is unusual, as none of his works are directly shown or reproduced. Instead, Kuball's work corresponds to a multi-layered, open, critical, and—at the same time—aesthetic examination. It encourages one to perceive, recognize, and critically question the processes behind the works.

Marfa Floater (indoor/outdoor), 2009

The installation in this space consists of two videos and several drawings. The video work was created in 2009 in Marfa, a small town in the Texan desert, which—thanks to the Donald Judd Foundation—has become a center of American Minimal Art. The "main protagonist" of the video is a paper-thin emergency blanket made of metallized polyester. Propelled by the desert wind and floating almost weightlessly through the surroundings, the blanket is detached from its actual intended use and appears as a counter-design to the static-cubic works of male-dominated Minimalism.

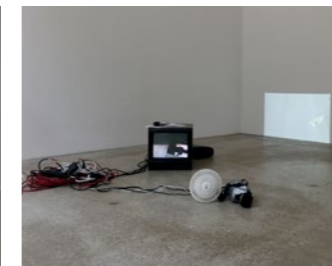
Ten years later, in 2019, the performance was recreated in Germany. The video work filmed in Berlin can be seen in the next space.

Berlin Floater (outdoor/drone), 2019

Filmed from a bird's eye view with a drone, in 2019—ten years after the performance *Marfa Floater*—an emergency blanket once again floated through the landscape; this time, however, not in Texas, but in the middle



Marfa Floater (indoor/outdoor), 2009



Berlin Floater (outdoor/drone), 2019

of Berlin. Set in motion by a fan, the shiny blanket exits Mischa Kuball's gallery exhibition in Berlin and floats along Friedrichstrasse. In both places, the performance spanned both interiors and exteriors, establishing a connection between the two sites: Marfa and Berlin.

Here as well, the emergency blanket is stripped of its original purpose and refers to the vulnerability, the helplessness of people (in public spaces) and, beyond general emergencies, also gives rise to associations with homelessness and flight.

making of Mnemosyne (after Aby Warburg), 2021

With his latest work, *making of Mnemosyne (after Aby Warburg)* from 2021, conceived especially for this exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Mischa Kuball reflects on questions of cultural history. It is about the method of comparative visual analysis that underlies the reconstruction of Aby Warburg's (1866–1929) famous image atlas.

The installation *making of Mnemosyne (after Aby Warburg)* consists of two video projections onto wall sections, each three meters high, one of which lies on the floor. The vertically projected video depicts panels from Aby Warburg's *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (Mnemosyne Image Atlas), while the horizontal projection shows the work of reconstructing the panels.



making of Mnemosyne (after Aby Warburg), 2021

Aby Warburg was an art historian and cultural scholar. He is considered one of the pioneers of modern art and image studies. His concept is based on the similarity of images and their motifs across time and many eras. His *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* shows recurring visual themes and patterns from antiquity via the Renaissance to contemporary culture. The atlas includes sixty-three panels and nearly 1,000 individual images. Warburg attached predominantly photographs, but also illustrations from books, original graphics, newspaper pages, and stamps onto his image panels. Named after Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of memory and mother of the Muses, the image atlas serves as an instrument of knowledge based on comparative visual analysis.

The work *making of Mnemosyne (after Aby Warburg)* has content-related connections to the works *research_desk_Nolde/Kritik/Kuball* and *Magazin des 20. Jahrhunderts*. With the aforementioned works, Mischa Kuball critically examines the research of (reception) contexts in art and cultural studies. In doing so, the method of comparison and the change of perspective always lead to new insights and question the uncritical assumption of realities or truths.

five planets, 2015

Five rotating disco balls form the center of *five planets*. Their mirrored surfaces are illuminated by light stencils so that they cast the names of five planets of our solar system as fragments of light onto the walls and floor of the space. The interlocking reflections of the disco balls network the dark space and suggest the presence of Venus, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mercury. With their reflections expanding and overlapping in space, a universe of its own is created.