

## ROMAN BUXBAUM: UNKNOWN ARTIST

Wasserkirche, Zurich  
June 12 – July 12, 2026

On the occasion of Zurich Art Weekend, artist, psychiatrist, and psychotherapist Roman Buxbaum (\*1958) presents *UNKNOWN ARTIST*, an exhibition and interactive performance exploring what makes creative work visible—and what allows it to disappear into anonymity. Developed together with a group of art students, themes of the contemporary art world were transformed into performative actions and situations as well as in immersive installation. Rather than celebrating the heroes of art history and their immortal works, the project is dedicated to unknown artists whose paintings remain nameless and unnoticed in attics, cellars, second-hand shops and flea markets.

The performance unfolds as a procession with music, singing and monstrosities, a manifesto read aloud and answered by a speaking chorus, the contemplative laying down of candles in memory of the forgotten, and the ceremonial unveiling of a monument to the unknown artist. Oscillating between performative action, political agitation, psychotherapy and religious ritual, these elements are brought together through a shared scenography under the title *UNKNOWN ARTIST*.

The images used in the performance and installation are reused paintings and sculptures collected from second-hand shops. Their makers remain unknown and largely insignificant in public perception; yet the works testify to time, dedication and a desire to preserve an imagination. Brought together by chance or fate, these paintings share the collective anonymity of their creators. They are not the works of a single individual, but of a group of artists connected only by the wish to leave a lasting trace.

By dedicating a performance, an act of attention and ultimately a monument to the unknown artist, the project points to the enduring agency of images. The artist may be dead, but the images remain alive. Their afterlife makes tangible a force that ultimately refers not to the maker, but to the existential urge to see the world through one's own eyes and bear witness to it through images.

The exhibition also features *The House of Dead Images* (2021–ongoing) for the first time. In this installation, Buxbaum incorporates countless “dead” images, photographs and found objects collected and reworked over many years. Housed within a structure made of painted industrial pallets, the work evokes attics and cellars while functioning as a protected space for engaging with images, memories and ancestral stories. Here, questions of mortality, remembrance and the afterlife of images converge.

The project was developed through an interdisciplinary and process-based collaboration in which questions of authorship and social roles are addressed both conceptually and structurally. Throughout the exhibition, artists from Living Museum Zürich and visitors are invited to work, draw, write and engage with the installation, extending the project's collective and participatory dimension at the intersection of psychotherapy, performance and visual art.

— Christoph Lichtin

Concept and dramaturgy: Roman Buxbaum

Exhibition curator: Christoph Lichtin

Performance curatorial and dramaturgical collaboration: Karina Kottová

Performers: Karolína Kubešová, Zbyněk Rohlík, Barbora Šošolíková, Alessandra Točoňová (Academy of Performing Arts, Prague) and students of art academies