

Stephan Balkenhol

Vernissage: Thursday, October 31, 2019, 6–8 pm
Duration: November 1, 2019 – January 11, 2020
Opening hours: Tues–Fri 11 am – 6.30 pm, Sat 11 am – 4 pm

We are delighted to present new sculptures by Stephan Balkenhol.

Stephan Balkenhol has been exploring figurative sculpture since the 1980s. In doing so, he has developed a unique formal syntax. His career as an artist began following his studies under Ulrich Rückriem from 1976 to 1982 at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg. By 1983, he had already created his first figurative wooden sculptures of a naked man and a naked woman, bringing the human figure to the fore in his artistic work. Now, for some thirty odd years, he has been addressing the human figure and, with that, the fundamental questions of human existence in all its facets.

His rough-hewn, painted sculptures render visible the artisanal process and the sculptural approach, combining both the raw and the precise. With mallet and chisel, he brings forth figures from a massive tree-trunk, whereby the figures, bound as they are to the base or plinth, seem to look out anonymously into the void, without engaging directly with the observer.

The singularity of his figures lies in the ambiguity of their expression. It is impossible to pin down any particular emotion. At any moment, they might break out into laughter or tears. It is this in-between that moves the observer, turning the sculptures into wooden mirrors of ourselves, which answer – albeit not definitively – our own questions of self-perception and existentiality. This lends them an irresistible presence.

Like the sculptural, chiseling, carving aspects of his work, so too have drawing and photography long been an integral part of Stephan Balkenhol's art; often in the form of studies for his sculptures, sketches for ideas, or concepts that did not necessarily come to fruition in sculptural form. For Balkenhol, drawing remains a very direct and immediate form of expression. In addition to the wood-hewn and bronze-cast sculptures for which he is best known, Balkenhol has also produced a wide-ranging oeuvre of drawings.

About the artist

Stephan Balkenhol (*1957) is one of Germany's foremost sculptors. Following teaching appointments at both the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg and at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste - Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main, he has held a professorship in Sculpture at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Karlsruhe since 1992.

His works are represented worldwide in leading museums, exhibitions and collections and many examples can be found in prominent public spaces (2019 Toronto, Le Havre, Amiens). In 2019 alone, his work has been shown in Leipzig, Stockholm, Tokio and at the Museum für Sepulkralkultur in Kassel. Further exhibitions are planned for 2020 at the Museum Asger Jorn in Silkeborg and at the Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg.

Mai 36 Galerie has been exhibiting Stephan Balkenhol over the last thirty years.

The opening is on Thursday, October 31 from 6 to 8 pm Stephan Balkenhol will be present.

We are happy to provide visual materials on request (office@mai36.com).

We look forward to seeing you at the gallery and thank you for your interest.

Mai 36 Galerie
Victor Gisler

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