

**Stephan Balkenhol**

Opening  
Thursday 12 December  
6.30 pm

Exhibition  
12.12.2019 – 29.02.2020

Hours  
Tuesday – Saturday  
3 – 7 pm

We are delighted to announce an exhibition of new works by Stephan Balkenhol, one of the most prominent contemporary sculptors.

Balkenhol's work ranges from full-size sculptures, installations and reliefs to photographs and drawings. Since 1992 he is professor at the State Academy of the Arts in Karlsruhe and divides his time between Germany and Meisenthal, France.

Stephan Balkenhol was born in Fritzlar (Hessen), Germany in 1957 and since more than twenty years has been breathing new life into figurative sculpture with intense and original work. After leaving the Hamburg Academy, where he studied with the German minimalist sculptor Ulrich Rückriem, Balkenhol soon discovered his preference for wood as a material and his interest in wanting 'to reinvent the figure'.

The human figure, animals, and recently also architecture, are the motifs Balkenhol chooses for his sculptures. He gouges them out of a tree trunk, and the traces left by the tools, branch notches and splits in the wood are left visible. Paint is used in a reduced form to structure the sculptures. Gestures, poses and facial expressions suggest both inner distance and an attentive openness towards the viewer. Balkenhol's figures are not lively 'storytellers'. Instead the artist seeks to condense human physiognomy and appearance, with the result that his figures seem unpretentious, unobtrusive and simultaneously removed from time: 'I don't want talkative, expressive figures, which is why I seek an open expression from out of which all states are possible.' The openness of his figures, the absence of gesture and a narrative context is a counter reaction to a deliberately present-oriented or illustrative figuration that may well address an individual aspect but, being a kind of instantaneous take, would restrict all other possible interpretations. By turning to themes of everyday in his sculptures, relief and extensive installations, the artist has fathomed new aesthetic dimensions - also in the public domain and in the context of architecture - and thereby made new options available for contemporary sculpture.

Since the 1980s he has shown extensively in European and American galleries and museums, among these in recent years at the Kunsthalle Emden (2018); Centro de Arte Contemporaneo of Malaga (2018); Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2016); 'New Sculptures', Landes Museum of Linz (2015-2014); Musée de Grenoble (2010); Deichtorhallen Hamburg (2008-2009); Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea Milano (2007) and Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (2006).

He has created also many public works, among these a new Richard Wagner Memorial, in Leipzig in May 2013, a large-scale presentation at the Church of Saint Elizabeth in Kassel in 2012 and a monumental sculpture of a male torso shown at the Foro di Cesare in Roma in 2010: a contemporary presence among the ancient ruins.