

STEPHAN BALKENHOL DA CAPO

January 25, 2020 - March 28, 2020

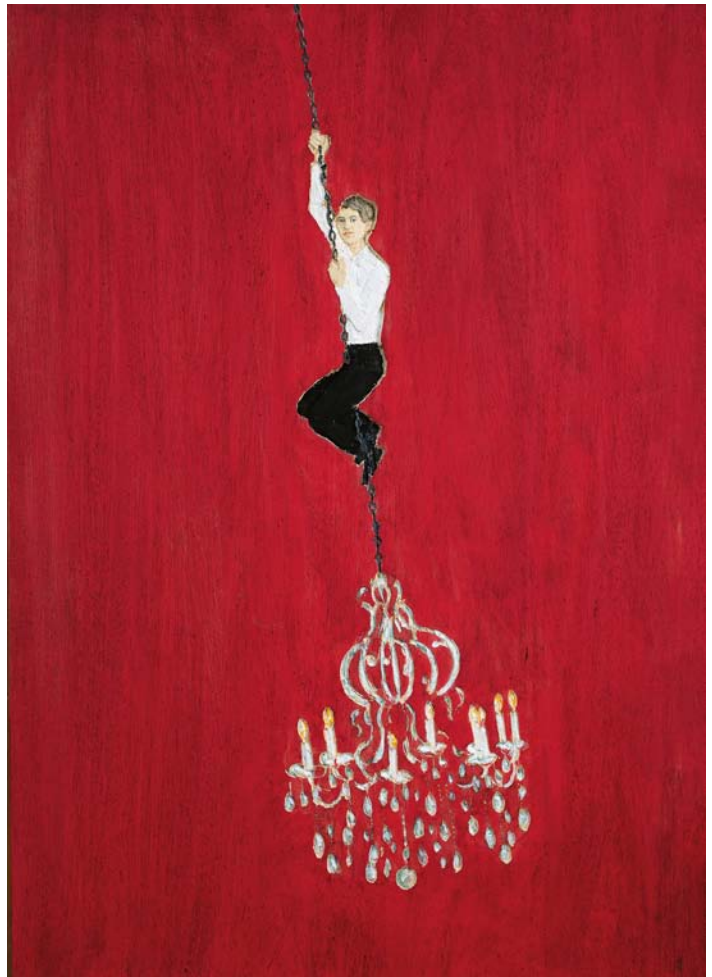
Mirabellplatz 2, Salzburg

What distinguishes Balkenhol's sculptures is surely this serenity [...] Ultimately, we encounter them as mute messengers from a dream realm. Our gaze does not meet theirs, but: they have this look – they lead us into the world of what they have beheld [...] like the ferrymen on a journey that takes us away from here. That is their mission: hence their motionlessness, their weightiness. – Thomas Oberender

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac presents the exhibition *DA CAPO* by German sculptor Stephan Balkenhol – devoted, as the title suggests, to the ambivalence of new beginnings. On display is a new series of works in which the artist explores the notions of courage, strength and hubris at stake in the process of renewal. Some of the figures, depicted in the form of sculptures or wall reliefs, are shown in performative roles such as that of a conductor or a musician, evoking the aura of classical music and its attendant associations

Balkenhol has been creating statuary wooden sculptures for more than three decades, hewing them directly from the wood with hammer and chisel. Despite the prevalent abstract trends in sculpture, he had already begun working figuratively during his studies under Ulrich Rückriem at the Hamburg Academy of Fine Arts (1976–82).

Set against a background of conceptual strictness and the minimalism of his teacher's works, Balkenhol was the exception, reintroducing the figure to contemporary sculpture. In his works, the traces left by the chisel remain visible, and the geometric wooden block from which the sculpture emerges is retained as a pedestal or residual form.



Stephan Balkenhol, *Mann im Kronleuchter*, 2019 Wawa wood, painted, 90 x 60 x 2 cm. © Stephan Balkenhol, Bildrecht, Wien, 2019.

The cube at its base is inseparable from the figure rising from it, evoking the enclosing contours of the original wood block. The archaic, expressive treatment of the material coincides with the representation of human, animal or hybrid beings executed at different scales.

'I don't want any garrulous, over-expressive figures. So I look for an open expression which allows all kinds of conditions', explains Balkenhol.

Since 2007, the artist has been part of the *Walk of Modern Art* in Salzburg, where his almost 9m high sculpture *Sphaera* beside the Cathedral is the most-photographed work of art and has had a lasting effect on the image of the Old Town. His large-scale wooden relief *Woman with Mantle* has been on permanent display in the Haus für Mozart since 2011.

Balkenhol's works are represented in distinguished institutional collections and shown in museum exhibitions worldwide, including comprehensive solo shows at Le Portique centre régional d'art contemporain du Havre (2019); Museum für Sepulkralkultur, Kassel (2019); Kunsthalle Emden (2018); Centro de arte contemporáneo, Málaga (2018); Deweer Gallery, Brussels (2018); Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2016); Fondation Fernet-Branca, Saint-Louis (2016); Landesmuseum, Linz (2014); Skulpturenpark Waldfrieden, Wuppertal (2014); Kunstmuseum Ravensburg (2014); Musée de Grenoble (2010); Deichtorhallen Hamburg (2008/09); Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Museum Küppersmühle, Duisburg and Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2006/07); National Museum of Art, Osaka (2005); and Sprengel Museum, Hanover (2003). Further major exhibitions are planned for 2020 at Museum Jorn, Silkeborg and Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg.

GALERIE THADDAEUS ROPAC
MIRABELLPLATZ 2, SALZBURG
T +43 662 881393
ROPAC.NET
OPENING HOURS
TUESDAY – FRIDAY 10 AM – 6 PM
SATURDAY 10 AM – 2 PM

OPENING HOURS DURING THE MOZART WEEK
27 JANUARY – 1 FEBRUARY 2020
MONDAY – SATURDAY 10 AM – 2 PM

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