

STEPHAN BALKENHOL

KÖNIG GALERIE | CHAPEL

10 SEPTEMBER – 9 NOVEMBER 2025

KÖNIG GALERIE is pleased to present an exhibition by Stephan Balkenhol in the Chapel of St. Agnes, featuring a selection of both new and earlier works. It is the artist's third show with the gallery.

Since the 1980s, Stephan Balkenhol has devoted his practice to exploring the human figure. While sculpture has traditionally portrayed monarchs, rulers, or mythological and religious figures, Balkenhol instead turns his attention to the "everyman": men in black trousers and white shirts, or women in simple dresses and heels. His figures are contemporary, yet their faces remain enigmatic—neither clearly revealing their stories nor their emotions, inviting viewers to step in and interpret.

At the far end of the Chapel, a monumental head rests on a platform, gazing toward a quintessential Balkenhol man in black trousers and a white shirt. They confront one another—are they questioning, doubting, or seeking justification? Are they, perhaps, two sides of the same person: face and figure, the "I" and the "superego" in Freud's terms? Or might they echo, in a more spiritual sense, uncertainty and failure, guilt and justification before a higher judge?

Balkenhol carves his figures directly from solid tree trunks. This is evident in the massive bases that form an inseparable part of each sculpture. He favors softwoods such as poplar, wawa, and cedar, whose roughly hewn surfaces and painted finishes lend his work a distinctive character—celebrating the craft of making as much as the finished form.

These bases also appear in his nun figures, whose faces carry the same timeless ambiguity that we know from other works by Balkenhol. Their faces are hard to read—they are solemn but almost seem to be smiling at the same time – have they been whispering with each other, sharing secrets or innermost thoughts?

Reviving the tradition of portraiture while stripping away individual attributes or accessories, Balkenhol gives his figures a contemporary presence. His sculptures possess a tactile immediacy that lays bare the physical act of carving. Their raw surfaces contrast sharply with the stillness and quiet openness expressed in their faces—poised between the everyday and the universal.

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OPENING TIMES

Tuesday – Sunday 11 am – 6 pm
and by appointment

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