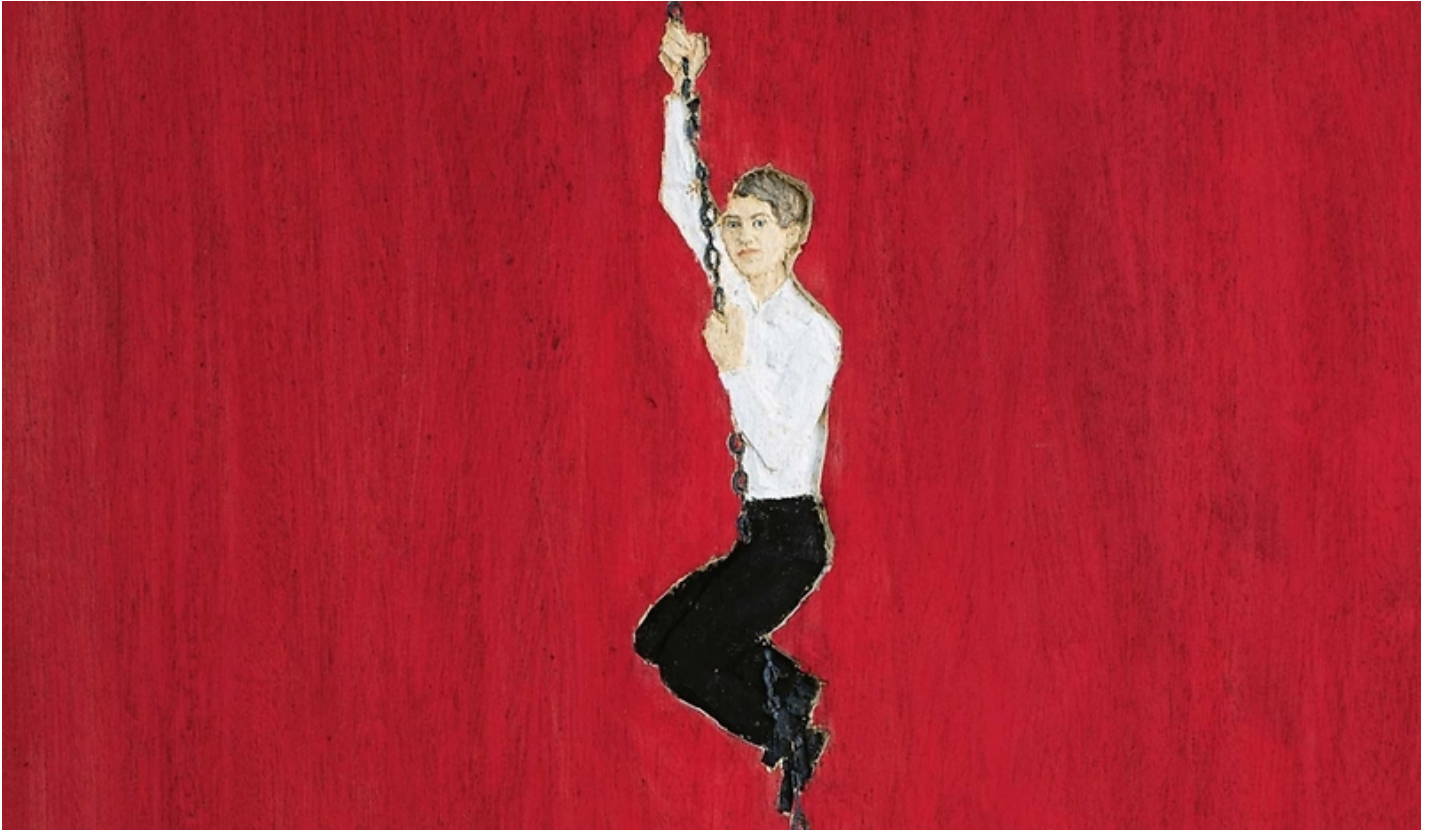

STEPHAN BALKENHOL

DA CAPO

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

25 Jan 2020 - 28 Mar 2020



OPENING SALZBURG

STAURDAY, 25 JANUARY 2020, 12 PM

THE ARTIST WILL BE PRESENT

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 a new beginning. On display is a new series of works in which the artist explores subjects such as courage, strength and hubris, which are inherent in the often ambivalent 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 out of the wood with hammer and chisel. Despite the prevalent abstract trends in sculpture, during his studies under Ulrich Rückriem at the Hamburg Academy of Fine Arts (1976-82), he had already decided to work figuratively. Against the background of conceptual strictness and the minimalism of his teacher's works, this was the exception. In Balkenhol's works, the traces left by the chisel remain visible, and the regular wooden block from which the sculpture emerges remains as a pedestal or residue for the viewer. The actual cube at the bottom is inseparable from the figure emerging from it, and thus appears to continue around it. The archaic, expressive treatment of the material coincides with the representation of human, animal or fabulous beings executed larger or smaller than life.

"I don't want any garrulous, over-expressive figures. So I look for an open expression which allows all kinds of conditions" says 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 has had a lasting effect on the image of the Old Town as the most-photographed work of art. His large-scale wooden relief *Woman with Mantle* has been on permanent exhibition in the Haus für Mozart since 2011.

Balkenhol's works are represented in distinguished museum collections and are shown in institutional exhibitions worldwide, as for instance in comprehensive solo exhibitions devoted to Balkenhol held at the 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, 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 (DK) and Lehbruck Museum/Duisburg (D).