
GROUP EXHIBITION

FREUNDSCHAFTSSPIEL - SKULPTUR06

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

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STEPHAN BALKENHOL
GEORG BASELITZ
TONY CRAGG
RICHARD DEACON
ANISH KAPOOR
IMI KNOEBEL
WOLFGANG LAIB
RICHARD LONG

In close collaboration with Norman Rosenthal, Director of the London Royal Academy of Arts, we have brought together four German and four British approaches to contemporary sculpture, to form an exciting dialogue in the group exhibition Friendly Game. A comprehensive catalogue with an essay by Norman Rosenthal will accompany the exhibition.

STEPHAN BALKENHOL
Born in Fritzlar (Hessen) in 1957
Lives and works in Karlsruhe and Meisenthal (Alsace)

During his studies (1976-82) with Ulrich Rückriem at the Hamburg Academy of Fine Arts, Stephan Balkenhol decided on figurative work. In view of the conceptual strictness and the minimalism of his teacher's work and of the dominance of abstract trends in the sculpture of the 1960s and '70s, this was by no means a matter of course. In 1982 and 1983 he produced the first coloured wood sculptures showing a style which was typical of his work and which developed continuously over the ensuing years, expanding into a gradually expanding set of themes. An expressive, archaic treatment of wood is combined with the representation of human, animal or fabulous figures, either in unpretentious poses or involved in everyday – or at any rate unemotional – interaction. Despite the precise coordination of the proportions, the wood remains a split, rough-hewn material. The figures are either oversized or undersized – never of natural dimensions. This alienation produces an interesting tension, in that the figures seem very close, in human terms, yet at the same time spatially very distant and detached. In addition, Balkenhol's figures belong in no particular context and are not to be regarded under social aspects. Open and neutral, they convey no message other than that of their own presence. On the one hand, in his effort to liberate sculpture from political, religious or allegorical implications, Balkenhol stands in the tradition of sculptors such as Aristide Maillol, Georg Kolbe or Wilhelm Lehmbruck. On the other, through his commitment to the prosaic and the playful, Balkenhol demonstrates his affinity with Pop Art, and through his insistence on autonomy and self-reference, also with Minimal Art. A major retrospective of his work, shown in 2005 in Osaka and Tokyo, has just closed.

Stephan Balkenhol is showing three new wood sculptures created specially for this exhibition.

GEORG BASELITZ
Born in Deutschbaselitz (Saxony) in 1938
Lives and works in Derneburg (Lower Saxony)

Georg Baselitz has worked on sculptures since the end of the 1970s. In 1980, his sculpture was first presented in the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, with the roughly worked wooden figure Model for a Sculpture, which elicited vehement polemic comments. "Baselitz practises his art as something precarious, like walking a tightrope, where every step means either fall or survival. This can be observed most clearly in the wood sculptures, where one can see how the voracious power saw has almost bitten away the nose or the arm which now proudly project into the room like survivors of a massacre. Each work is the story of a lucky escape from a narrowly averted catastrophe" (Wilfried Wiegand). Since 1966, Baselitz has concerned himself intensively with his own past, producing family pictures and

portraits, a role being played by themes such as homeland, childhood and folk art. The new works, in contrast, are of a surprising formal lightness, apparently freed from the ballast of the past. This impression is given on the one hand by the partial layer of varnish and fact that the surfaces of his

paintings are not completely filled in. New also is the experimental character of these pictures, which allows the viewer to participate in the creative process, since footprints or smudges made by the artist can be detected on the surface. Baselitz is not concerned with filling in the round, sometimes white areas that show where the paint-pots stood on the picture while he was painting. He carries this unconcern over to the painting of his latest bronze sculptures based on wooden models.

We are delighted that Georg Baselitz has decided to present his very first bronze figure in public at our exhibition Friendly Game.

TONY CRAGG

Born in Liverpool in 1949

Lives and works in Wuppertal (Germany)

With his multifarious oeuvre, Tony Cragg (winner of the famous Turner Prize in 1988) is one of the most important contemporary sculptors. This English artist often takes materials unusual in art, such as plastic, glass or polystyrene, and uses them to develop new sculptural forms. After a long period of using found objects, in his latest work Cragg has turned increasingly to traditional processes such as bronze-casting or wood-sculpture, which he extends with the resources of modern technology. His two latest large work-groups are Early Forms and Rational Beings. Cragg's sculptures, which are never static, exert a fascination through their accessibility and their vitality. Operating with familiar forms and objects, they are accessible at first glance. However, they never convey a single point of view or a single valid image, but in the process of viewing they grow into complex phenomena which affect our perception on several different levels. Similarly to the way faces appear and disappear, in his latest pillars from the series Rational Beings, in Early Forms the shapes of vessels emerge, which were set in a kind of motion that changed their shape or caused them to disappear completely. Cragg's surfaces have an ambivalent function – they can enhance the materiality of a sculpture, or they can dissolve it. Thus his sculptures vary between illusionism and concrete reality. Nothing is certain. Change is the essence of Tony Cragg's sculptures. Their creation and their perception being processual, they evolve organically. It is primarily for this reason that Tony Cragg's sculptures are Signs of Life – the title of his major retrospective shown in Bonn and Rome in 2003.

In our Salzburg exhibition, Tony Cragg is showing three new bronzes and a monumental fibreglass sculpture.

RICHARD DEACON

Born in Bangor (Wales) in 1949

Lives and works in London

Richard Deacon, who won the Turner Prize in 1987 and has taught since 1999 at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, is regarded worldwide as one of the most important sculptors to follow the ideas of Naum Gabo, Henry Moore and Hans Arp, and to champion the autonomy of the art of sculpture. His works stand simply for what they are and what they show. His family background (his father was an engineer) afforded him insight into the necessity of relating amorphous shapes to the complex world of forms in mathematics and technology. At the time of Arp and Moore, chaotic forms were still considered irrational. Today those same forms are calculable. Richard Deacon's sculptures bear witness to this change.

Richard Deacon contributes to the exhibition Friendly Game a new ceramic sculpture and a recently completed wood sculpture.

ANISH KAPOOR

Born in Mumbai in 1954

Lives and works in London

Anish Kapoor's work, which has brought him many awards, has been exhibited worldwide since the early 1970s. In 1990, he represented Great Britain at the Venice Biennale, where an international jury awarded him the coveted Premio 2000, and he won the 1991 Turner Prize. One of the highlights of documenta 9 was Kapoor's Descent into Limbo (1992). Here one enters a cube, in the middle of which a black hole of infinite depth opens in the ground. Kapoor's work combines the spiritual tradition of his homeland with the idea of the sublime as contained in western art tradition. Since his first sculptures – simple forms with coloured pigment, spread over the ground – Kapoor has developed a multi-faceted oeuvre of various materials, such as stone, steel or glass. In his objects and sculptures, the boundaries between painting and sculpture are blurred. For three-dimensional works, his procedure is that of a sculptor, but the themes of void, absence, transformation and immateriality are those of painting. His intention is to create sculptures which deal not only with questions of form, but also with themes such as faith, passion or experiences beyond material concerns.

Five new stainless steel sculptures by Anish Kapoor will be shown in the exhibition.

IMI KNOEBEL

Born in Dessau in 1940

Lives and works in Düsseldorf

Klaus Wolf Knoebel spent his childhood in Dresden and moved with his family to Mainz in 1950. 1962-64 at the Darmstadt School of Arts and Crafts, together with Rainer Giese, he studied constructive and structural composition exercises according to the ideas of Johannes Itten and László Moholy-Nagy. Fascinated by the personality of Joseph Beuys as a teacher, the duo – who adopted the same forename "Imi" – transferred to the Academy of Art in Düsseldorf (1964-71). At a geographical distance from and in external contrast to Beuys, Knoebel's first installation, Raum 19, consisted of various geometrical objects. Similarly to his fellow-student Blinky Palermo, with whom he shared a studio in 1968, he worked on analytical series on the relation between space, picture ground and colour. The reduction to the elementary coordinates of painting follows his second great model, Kasimir Malevich. After puristic line-drawings, light projections and white pictures (1972-75), he used colour for the first time in 1974, and in 1975 he started to make overlapping coloured rectangles painted with Menninge (an industrial rustproof paint), and latterly brightly coloured, expressive colour combinations on laminated plywood and metal plates placed in a specific spatial relation. Projects such as Deutsches Tor and Kinderstern (both 1988) demonstrate the artist's socio-political commitment. Besides one-man shows in museums, including Düsseldorf (1975), Winterthur and Bon (1983) and Hamburg (1992), Knoebel's work has also been represented in documenta 5, 6 and 7. In 1996 a major retrospective of his work was held in the Haus der Kunst in Munich. In 2002, the famous Kestner Society in Hanover celebrated its 75th anniversary with a show of Knoebel's more recent works.

Imi Knoebel is represented by a new arrangement of his legendary work 30 Keilrahmen (1968) and the acrylic/aluminium sculpture BUNT 1.

WOLFGANG LAIB

Born in Metzingen (Baden-Württemberg) in 1959

Lives and works in Hochdorf bei Biberach (Baden-Württemberg)

In his work, Wolfgang Laib is concerned less with innovation or formal development than with continuity. His works are not to be considered chronologically, but in regular cycles of repeated forms and materials. Central materials are milk, pollen, rice, wax and marble; the forms of cone, rectangle and stylised motifs such as houses, ships and stairs are characteristic. Laib created his first milk-stone in 1975: a shallow bowl hollowed in the centre of a rectangular marble block is filled with milk. The stone is filled with fresh milk every morning and cleaned in the evening. Solid and liquid seem to merge, giving rise to a delicate balance between motion and immobility. In 1977, Laib realised his first work with pine, hazel, buttercup and dandelion pollen, which he sieved on to the ground in a temporary rectangle. The pollens of the various plants differ in colour and

consistency: the orange dandelion pollen is much coarser-grained than the fine pale yellow pine pollen. This fruitful sun-laden substance on the ground

seems to hover, radiant and fragrant. The knowledge of its precarious existence – the merest draught or hand movement can destroy it – makes for a very special kind of concentration. From time to time, Wolfgang Laib adopts a new form into his artistic vocabulary, or realises it in a different material – as for instance the staircase. In 1992, this motif appeared as part of an untitled work made of beeswax; in 2002 he realised the form for the first time in black and vermilion Thitsi paint from Burma (Myanmar). All Wolfgang Laib's work is, as he says, "basically about one and the same thing": a journey, the convergence of motion and immobility of the material and the immaterial, of what is durable and what is transient; it is about balance and transformation, about the attempt to explore the irrational or the

impossible, and the search for an access or a transition to another world. Laib's materials, his forms and his artistic procedure are of a singular simplicity, purity and concentrated tranquillity.

A large wooden staircase painted with layers of black Burmese paint, three wax houses on a wooden console, and the work Reismahlzeiten, which consists of 14 brass plates and basmati rice, will be on view in the exhibition.

RICHARD LONG

Born in Bristol in 1945

Lives and works in Bristol

Long's œuvre is concerned with the physical experience of nature. His works mark out elementary geometric symbols such as circles, lines or rectangles of wood or stone, in a system of spatial and temporal processes. In landscapes untouched by civilisation, these show deliberate human intervention, and in exhibition rooms an archaic aspect of culture. Long's journeys, his peregrinations through landscapes in far-off countries, captured in photographs, maps and chronicles, express both the artist's individual aloofness and the general freedom of art. His work, directly addressing the senses, shows vividly the transience of nature – through a circle drawn in the sand of the Sahara –, and its durability – through a path of granite blocks, made for a museum. Although he deliberately confines himself to a limited formal language (circle, line, meander, cross) the wealth of association is limitless.

For the exhibition, Richard Long has created the travelling work Entropy Stones, and is also showing one of his classic Stone Circles.