

Press Release

Stephan Balkenhol

Tout le monde

2. July—4 September 2022

Talk with the artist:

23 August 2022, 6pm

Thaddaeus Ropac

Salzburg Halle

Vilniusstraße 13, 5020 Salzburg



1. Stephan Balkenhol, *Diva*, 2020

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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



2. Stephan Balkenhol, *Grauer Mann*, 2020

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.

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.

The stories behind the anonymous figures in the exhibition remain untold. ‘My sculptures don’t tell stories. There is something that has to do with secrecy. It is not for me to reveal it, but for the viewer to discover it by himself’ explains the artist, who chooses not to reveal specific narratives. In this human comedy populated by fictional characters, several scenarios seem possible.



3. Stephan Balkenhol in his studio

Since 2007, the artist has been part of the ‘Walk of Modern Art’ in Salzburg. His almost 9 metre high sculpture *Sphaera* is the most-photographed work of art in the city and has had a lasting effect on the image of the Old Town. His large-scale wooden relief *Frau mit Mantel (Woman with Coat)* 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 (2006), Museum Küppersmühle, Duisburg (2006) and Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2006/07); National Museum of Art, Osaka (2005); and Sprengel Museum, Hanover (2003). In 2020 his works were shown in solo exhibitions at Museum Jorn, Silkeborg and Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg.

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Share your thoughts with:

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#stephanbalkenhol
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Images: **1. Stephan Balkenhol, *Diva*, 2020.** Ayous. 184 x 40 x 79 cm (72.44 x 15.75 x 31.1 in), ca. 150 kg. Foto: Charles Duprat. © Stephan Balkenhol / VG Bildkunst, Bonn 2022. **2. Stephan Balkenhol, *Grauer Mann*, 2020.** Cedar. 190 x 75 x 36 cm (74.8 x 29.53 x 14.17 in), ca. 150 kg. Foto: Charles Duprat. © Stephan Balkenhol / VG Bildkunst, Bonn 2022. **3. Portrait von Stephan Balkenhol.** All Images: Courtesy Thaddaeus Ropac gallery, London · Paris · Salzburg · Seoul.