

## STEPHAN BALKENHOL

---

**STEPHAN BALKENHOL**

PARIS DEBELLEYME

14 Saturday - 19 Saturday

---



"My sculptures don't tell stories. Something mysterious is concealed in them. It's not my task to reveal this, but the task of the viewer to discover it."  
Stephan Balkenhol

Stephan Balkenhol (born 1957) is one of those trail-blazing German sculptors who in the last two decades has also exerted a great influence internationally. The Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, the MKM Duisburg and currently the Museum der Moderne Salzburg have been devoting an extensive exhibition to his oeuvre focusing on Balkenhol's technical mastery and on the diversity of his intellectual and cultural references. The human form, the head, animals, and recently also architecture, are the motifs Balkenhol chooses for his sculptures, drawings and photographs.

To a certain extent Balkenhol's creative approach is a response to the minimalist strategies of Ullrich Rückriem, his teacher at the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Hamburg from 1976 to 1982. Since the early 1980s, Balkenhol has been exploring what can actually be shown, sensed, seen by means of statuary images against the backdrop of the current engagement with the tradition of classical sculpture.

At the centre of Balkenhol's work is the human form. The artist gouges his figures out of the tree trunk; traces left by the tools, branch notches and splits in the wood are left visible. Paint is used in a reduced form to structure the sculpture. The figures seem both personal and anonymous. Gestures, poses and facial expressions suggest both inner distance and an attentive openness towards the viewer. Balkenhol's figures are not lively "storytellers". Instead the artist seeks to condense human physiognomy and appearance, with the result that his figures seem unpretentious, unobtrusive and simultaneously removed from time: "I don't want talkative, expressive figures, which is why I seek an open expression from out of which all states are possible." The openness of his figures, the renunciation of gesture and a narrative context, is a counter reaction to a deliberately present-oriented or illustrative figuration that may well address an individual aspect, but, being a kind of instantaneous take, restricts all other possible interpretations.

The freedom and easy accessibility of Balkenhol's work is due to this kind of strange closeness. By turning to themes of everyday in his sculptures, reliefs and extensive installations, the artist has fathomed new aesthetic dimensions - also in the public domain and in the context of architecture - and thereby made new options available for contemporary sculpture.

The Paris exhibition will feature sculptures and reliefs dedicated to the human figure and architecture.