

## Stephan Balkenhol

Opening  
Saturday 23 November 2013  
at 6 pm

Exhibition  
23 November – 22 February 2014

Gallery hours  
Tuesday to Saturday  
3 -7 pm

We are pleased to announce an exhibition of new works by Stephan Balkenhol, one of the most prominent contemporary sculptors, whom we represent in Italy since 1996. Balkenhol's work ranges from full-size sculptures, installations and reliefs to photographs and drawings. Since 1992 he has been a professor at the State Academy of the Arts in Karlsruhe, and divides his time between Germany and Meisenthal, France.

In recent years he has created also many public works, among these a new Richard Wagner Memorial, in Leipzig in May 2013, a large-scale presentation at the Church of Saint Elizabeth in Kassel in 2012 and a monumental sculpture of a male torso shown at the Foro di Cesare in Roma in 2010: a contemporary presence among the ancient ruins.

Stephan Balkenhol was born in Fritzlar (Hessen) in Germany in 1957 and since more than twenty years has been breathing new life into figurative sculpture with intense and original work. After leaving the Hamburg Academy, where he studied with the German minimalist sculptor Ulrich Rückriem, Balkenhol soon discovered his preference for wood as a material and his interest in wanting "to reinvent the figure".

The human figure, animals, and recently also architecture, are the motifs Balkenhol chooses for his sculptures. He gouges them out of a tree trunk, and the 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 sculptures. 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 absence 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, would restrict all other possible interpretations. By turning to themes of everyday in his sculptures, relief 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.

Since the 1980s he has shown extensively in European and American galleries and museums, among these the Musée de Grenoble in 2010, Deichtorhallen Hamburg in 2008-2009, MKM Duisburg, Museum der Moderne Salzburg and Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea Milano in 2007, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden in 2006, National Museum of Art of Osaka in 2005, Sprengel Museum of Hannover in 2003.

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