

BARBARA GLADSTONE GALLERY

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STEPHAN BALKENHOL

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Barbara Gladstone Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new sculptures by the German artist Stephan Balkenhol.

Balkenhol's work updates the practice of sculpture in the tradition of the three-dimensional representation of the human figure. His sculptures usually depict figures on pedestals that are carved from single blocks of wood and then hand-painted. Balkenhol has revised the tradition of heroic representation in sculpture by using wood (rather than marble or bronze) to create figures that are ordinary rather than idealized, and anonymous rather than heroic. His sculptures convey a universal humanism, as his figures are the familiar strangers that occupy our everyday lives, wearing ordinary clothing and introspective expressions.

The timelessness and universality of the human condition that Balkenhol represents is further achieved by his process. With soft woods, like wawa and poplar, he uses a chainsaw to quickly hew the figure and pedestal from one block of wood. He then uses various tools for the details and finally paints the surface, except for the flesh of the figure which is left natural. Balkenhol's process is revealed by the marks of his chisel and the well-worked surface of the sculpture, leaving one with a sense of the spontaneity and vitality of the act of making. The resultant works come to acknowledge the ever-present complexities between the individual and the universal. Neal Benezra, Director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, has stated: "At a time when all manner of political, social, and cultural dogma seems open to question, it may just be possible for Stephan Balkenhol to breathe new life into figurative sculpture."

Stephan Balkenhol was born in Fritzlar/Hessen, Germany in 1957, and lives and works in Karlsruhe, Germany and Meisenthal, France. He has recently completed a permanent, site-specific work for the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. He has been awarded the Karl-Schmidt-Rottluff Grant; the Baden-Württemberg International Prize; and the Bremen Art Prize. Recent solo exhibitions include: Forum for Contemporary Art, St. Louis; The Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; David Winton Bell Gallery, Providence; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg; the Von-der-Heydt Museum, Wuppertal-Elberfeld; The Arts Club of Chicago; The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; the Centre Europeen d'Actions Artistiques Contemporaines, Strasbourg; and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

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