



lehmbruckmuseum

Stephan Balkenhol

22 October 2020 to 28 February 2021

Press conference: Wednesday, 21 October, 11 a.m.

The figures that have made German sculptor Stephan Balkenhol (*1957) famous across the globe are ordinary and yet unique. There is probably no other contemporary artist who has created such distinctive and unmistakable sculptural works. Balkenhol's iconic figures of a man in white shirt and black trousers have earned him recognition far beyond the German borders.

With more than 200 exhibits, the exhibition at the Duisburg Lehmbruck Museum is the biggest museum show of Stephan Balkenhol's work in Germany since 2008. Containing numerous works generally not accessible to the public, this comprehensive retrospective spans an arc from the early works from 1990 to the present day. Using sculptures, reliefs, plaster models and drawings, the Lehmbruck Museum primarily illuminates the references to intellectual and cultural history in Balkenhol's works. From the very beginning, he has explored Greek mythology, its narratives and visual worlds in his works. However, the spotlight is not on the omnipotence and immortality of the gods, but on their human aspects, their dramas and, above all, their failure. Balkenhol draws on visual motifs that have engaged and challenged artists of different eras over the centuries.

Stephan Balkenhol saws, cuts and carves his sculptures from wood with great physical effort. His figures openly display the characteristic traces of woodworking; splinters and grooves in the wood are visible. "Our eye is literally caught by the shavings and irregularities," says Dr. Söke Dinkla, director of the Lehmbruck Museum. "We sense the artist's hand, the physical work, the skilled craftsmanship that has created the figure. The *non-finito*, the apparent rawness of the sculpture, is precisely calculated." Balkenhol's works form blank spaces that encourage the viewers to complete and perfect the unfinished in their imagination.

The Lehmbruck Museum retrospective was created in close collaboration with the artist. A special highlight is a group of head sculptures created especially for the Duisburg exhibition and now presented for the first time.

An exhibition catalogue with essays by Dr. Söke Dinkla, Heinz-Norbert Jocks and Ronja Friedrichs will be published by the Schirmer/Mosel Verlag Munich. 120 pages, 70 coloured illustrations, on sale for 29.80 €.

The artist

Stephan Balkenhol was born in 1957 in Fritzlar, North Hesse. He lives and works in Kassel, Karlsruhe, Berlin and the French Meisenthal. He studied at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg from 1976 to 1982, among others with Ulrich Rückriem. Since 1983, Balkenhol's work has been marked by the artist's endeavour to re-constitute figurative sculpture. After teaching positions at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg and the Städelschule in Frankfurt on the Main he has taught as professor of sculpture at the State Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe since 1992.

Among Balkenhol's most important recent solo exhibitions were:

Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal (1998), Sprengel Museum, Hanover (2003), National Museum of Contemporary Art, Osaka, and Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery (2005), Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden (2006, toured to Museum der Moderne Salzburg and MKM Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, Duisburg), Deichtorhallen Hamburg (2008/09), Musée de Grenoble (2010/11), Kunstmuseum Ravensburg (2014), Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2016), Centro de arte contemporáneo de Málaga and Kunsthalle Emden (2018), Museum of Sepulchral Culture, Kassel (2019), Museum Jorn, Silkeborg (2020).

Balkenhol's works are held in numerous private and public collections across the world. Among his commissions for public spaces are: Man with Fish, Chicago (2000), Four Large Figures, San Francisco (2005), Giraffe Man, Strasbourg (2006), Sphaera, Salzburg (2007), Balancing Act, Berlin (2009), Sempre più ..., Forum Romanum, Rome (2009), Man in the Tower, St.-Elizabeth-Kirche, Kassel (2012), Monument for Richard Wagner, Leipzig (2013) and Monument for Jean Moulin, Metz (2014), Man with a Rose, Neuss (2017), Man on Seahorse, Waiblingen (2018) and Man with Cornucopia, Sneek (2018). Most recently, Balkenhol created the Toronto Man, Toronto (2019) and the Man with Seagull Head, Le Havre (2020).

Stephan Balkenhol received the Bremer Kunstpreis in 1990. In 2014, France honoured him with the *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*. In 2016 he was awarded an Honorary Membership of The Russian Academy of the Arts.

Supporters' statements

"Among Stephan Balkenhol's exceptional talents is the ability to see the extraordinary in the ordinary. The human being is at the centre of his work – and it is

this normality and familiarity that makes his sculptures so attractive,” says Sören Link, Lord Mayor of the City of Duisburg. “We are very pleased to be able to present an artist of such international renown as Stephan Balkenhol in Duisburg.”

Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen, Minister of Culture and Science of North Rhine-Westphalia: “Stephan Balkenhol’s works can be found in many places in North Rhine-Westphalia and shape public spaces, such as squares and parks. The particular strength of his figures lies in their apparent banality, while at the same time they offer a wealth of references and historical points of connection. In conjunction with the first-rate sculpture collection of the Lehmbruck Museum, the exhibition promises new insights into the history of sculpture while taking a refreshing and reflective look at our cultural history.”

“NATIONAL-BANK AG has made it its mission to strengthen the creative potential of the Rhine Ruhr Region through extensive exhibitions. In times like these in particular we want to act as a reliable partner of the institutions supported by us through our commitment,” says Dr. Thomas Lange, CEO of NATIONAL-BANK AG. “NATIONAL-BANK AG acquired its first work by Balkenhol for its collection as early as 2004, a work that will now be on display, along with others, in the Duisburg exhibition. Our thanks go to the artist as well as the Lehmbruck Museum and its director Dr. Söke Dinkla for the idea and realisation of this wonderful exhibition, which we wish a large audience.”

The exhibition “Stephan Balkenhol” is supported by NATIONAL-BANK AG, the Ministry of Culture and Science of North Rhine-Westphalia and the City of Duisburg within the framework of the Duisburger Akzente. In addition, the Lehmbruck Museum is indebted to Monika and Veit Messing as well as the Überörtliche Radiologische Gemeinschaftspraxis (Regional Radiology Group Practice) Duisburg-Moers, doctors Dabir, Hirning, Poll, Dabir-Scherfeld and their colleagues.

“The Adventures of the Man in Black Trousers and White Shirt”

The man in black trousers and white shirt is Stephan Balkenhol’s favourite figure. He has exciting adventures: sometimes he rides backwards on a bull, sometimes he fights a giant snake, sometimes he swings on the crescent of the moon or stands serenely on a pedestal. The sculptor and his daughters offer never-before-heard insights into the artist’s creative process. They take the Toniebox listeners on a tour through the exhibition in a charming, cheerful and child-friendly manner, with entertaining explanations of how the artist works, how his sculptures are created and why he works faster than he can think.

The Tonie figure was lovingly created by Stephan Balkenhol for the exhibition.

The Tonie tour lasts 37 minutes and is available free of charge at the ticket counter upon deposit of photo identification.

TONIE AUDIOGUIDE

Written and directed by: Kathrin Balkenhol

Voiced by: Paula, Hermine, Kathrin and Stephan Balkenhol

Model Tonie figure: Stephan Balkenhol

Manufacture of the Tonie figure and support: Monika and Veit Messing

Tonie technology and support: Patric Faßbender, Marcus Stahl and the Tonies team

Composition for two guitars: Martin Scharvogel and Rainer Salwiczek-Pfeifer

Music performed by: Martin Scharvogel and Rainer Salwiczek-Pfeifer

Sound engineering: Martin Scharvogel and Oliver Knieps

@ 2020 Kathrin Balkenhol

Supporting programme

The Lehmbruck Museum invites you to a series of events accompanying the exhibition "Stephan Balkenhol".

All events subject to possible changes due to the Corona pandemic. Adjustments may be made at short notice. Updated information will be published on the website of the Lehmbruck Museum.