

# MAI 36 GALERIE

## Stephan Balkenhol

**Opening:** March 10, 2016, 6 to 8 p.m.  
**Exhibition:** March 11 – April 16, 2016  
**Opening hours:** Tues - Fri 11 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., Sat 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Stephan Balkenhol (born in Fritzlar, Germany, in 1957) is *the* premier spirit behind the revival of figurative sculpture in the early 1980s. He began making his trademark figurative sculptures in response to the abstract, minimalist and conceptual strategies of the Hamburg Academy of Fine Arts, on a heritage that ranges from early Christian sculpture to Modernism. Stephan Balkenhol's work is characterised by his colourfully painted and roughly hewn wooden sculptures and reliefs. Balkenhol's motifs are larger-than-life or dwarflike men, women and animals, heads and hybrid figures of humans and animals sculpted from huge tree trunks. The same tree trunks also serve as the plinths, which are inseparably joined to the figure.

Marks made by the tools, grooves, fissures and cracks remain visible, testifying to the working process. This does not preclude a strong sense of realism, reinforced by the treatment of contours, the pose of the figures and the way they are painted.

In stoic poses, they seem to be in a state of suspended animation, gazing into emptiness or at a point unknown to the observer. Thus the figures remain distant, anonymous and enigmatic, and strangely lacking in emotion. The observer feels reminded of something, only to doubt his perception a moment later. This creates a feeling of discomfiture because the hyper-individual and timeless figures hold up a mirror to the observer.

Not only the men and the women but also the animals reveal nothing about themselves; they tell no stories and represent nothing. They are inconspicuous, ageless and difficult to pin down; they show no emotions and appear curiously detached. They are simply there, serenely self-contained, as if gazing into the void; they are always the same and always new. Enigmatic, nameless and timeless, they are both distinctively personal and blandly anonymous. By eschewing psychological implications, the artist brings to the fore archetypal patterns of existence and emotions, so that his figures – especially those in public spaces – also function as mirrors that reflect viewers' feelings, desires and hopes.

Stephan Balkenhol ranks among Germany's most renowned international sculptors. Since 1992 he has been a professor at the State Academy of the Arts in Karlsruhe. Stephan Balkenhol has been represented by Mai 36 Galerie since 1989. His works, regularly on view internationally since the 1980s, enjoy eye-catching presentation in public space in a number of major cities.

**Opening: Thursday, March 10, 2016 – 6 to 8 p.m.** Stephan Balkenhol will be in attendance.  
For visual materials, please contact us at ([office@mai36.com](mailto:office@mai36.com)).

We look forward to seeing you at the gallery, and thank you for your interest.

Mai 36 Galerie  
Victor Gisler

March 2016