

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Regen Projects
629 North Almont Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90069
Tel.: (310) 276-5424
Fax.: (310) 276-7430

STEPHAN BALKENHOL: NEW SCULPTURE

March 6 - April 10, 1999

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11:00 am - 5:00 pm

Opening reception: Saturday, March 6, 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Regen Projects is pleased to present an exhibition of new sculpture by German artist **Stephan Balkenhol**. A student of Ulrich Ruckreim in Hamburg, **Balkenhol's** exploration of the figure emerged from the minimalist tradition in German sculpture. **Balkenhol's** sculptures are roughly hewn from single blocks of wood, though the artist professes that it is not the material itself that interests him, but the spontaneity and immediacy it allows in creating his forms--more than metal or stone could allow. The figures are usually larger or smaller than life size, and often resting on or cut from the same block as their pedestals. Unlike Expressionists such as Kirchner and Baselitz who use color to heighten the figure's expressive possibilities, the features of **Balkenhol's** figures are bluntly distinguished by a "matter-of-fact application of paint." Raw wood is left to stand as skin or flesh. The distant expression of many of these figures evokes the seemingly objective gaze of photographers such as August Sanders and Thomas Ruff. This cool evenness of expression contrasts the expressive quality of sculpted wood and the inevitably strong presence of the hand. (Stephan Balkenhol. Hirshhorn Museum. 1995)

Neal Benezra writes, **Balkenhol's** sculptures "hover tantalizingly between anonymity and likeness, between muteness and narrative."(ibid) With their common dress and neutral expressions, **Balkenhol's** subjects are a sort of "everyperson," addressing the narrative implications of the figure in their lack of distinction. **Balkenhol** has remarked that the figure is "so heavy with meaning: human figures always have to do with self-reflection on some level... they can work like a mirror." **Balkenhol** counteracts this by generalizing his subjects, isolating only the most subtle nuances of character in the gesture of a hand or the bend of a knee. (Stephan Balkenhol. The Arts Club of Chicago. 1998)

"While **Balkenhol** has resuscitated figurative sculpture from a burdensome tradition and achieved a distinctive approach, he has done so by jettisoning precisely the type of expressive content that has come to characterize figurative sculpture in wood. ... With a knowing innocence that is a welcome tonic for contemporary art, **Balkenhol** moves ahead. His art, it would seem, belongs not to those who covet it but rather to those who simply encounter it. In Europe and America, continents now teeming with men and women from other places and cultures, the significance of **Balkenhol's** sculpture may reside in the very anonymity of his men and women. Despite their unobtrusiveness, they remain insistently present." (Stephan Balkenhol. Hirshhorn Museum. 1995)

Balkenhol lives and works in Germany and France. **Balkenhol** has exhibited extensively throughout Europe and the United States. A mid-career retrospective of **Balkenhol's** work was organized by the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C. in the fall of 1995.

An opening reception for the artist will be held on Saturday, March 6 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at Regen Projects. For further information please contact Shaun Caley Regen or Lisa Overduin at the gallery.

