

The Buonarroti Club is a group of stone figures that Sebastian Schweikert has worked on over the last four years. The title of the exhibition refers on the one hand to Michelangelo Buonarroti, the grand master of stone sculpture, and on the other hand to a casual presence with subliminal tension and brokenness: think of Marlon Brando's Black Rebel Motorcycle Club in "The Wild One" and its many-formed renaissances since 1954.

I

Schweikert talks and thinks about graffiti (as he did in his youth) and now works in stone. Sculpture and actionism do not create a contradiction for him. In 1993 he reinterpreted Bremen's Neptune Fountain. For four hours, the decorative trident of the sea god became a kind of weapon directed against people. One could (and should) see this as a commentary against the indifference with which people accept violence in their everyday lives, but above all it was a commentary via sculptural means.

Schweikert knows what it means to place a sculpture in public space. A commission for the Teerhof in Bremen developed into a farcical village altercation, in which some people, most of whom create culture themselves, were bothered by the fact that here, in the vicinity of a museum of contemporary art, figurative work was placed in public space, and it turns out that the concept "figure" became a red rag to some people. Not all figures are given the same consideration. Schweikert has worked in Bremen, but he does not make figures in the local tradition, in which a notion of form and knowledge of tradition are central. Instead, his sculpture is about action, pose and statement.

II

Modern stone sculpture belongs at the ideological center of modern art. A hundred years ago, there was a passionate discussion about the so-called "taille directe", which explored a belief that, without a preparatory model, art could return itself to its beginnings and origins. As a result, the genre has a strong pathos, especially when the artist clearly demonstrates his work. With the technical progress of the last century, however, this became obsolete. Schweikert plays with pathos by using the jackhammer and other tools in a peculiar actionism that alternates seemingly arbitrarily between surface decoration and deeply furrowing movements in the stone.

The life of Schweikert's sculptures takes place on the surface, where the sculptor's movements have left their mark in space. Schweikert negates an essential aspect of stone as a material, the fact that it cannot be freely improvised with, which enables him to find a language of form that often seems to have been "churned out". His sculptures speak two separate languages, just as his representations alternate highly faceted between light elegance and heavy archaism.

Pose is the absolute antithesis of gesture and posture, the two core concepts of modern figurative sculpture. While gesture and posture stand for natural body language, pose stands for an unnatural, imposed bodily expression. The organic motoric of movement, which has been part of the European canon since Greek sculpture in the form of the classical contrapposto, plays no role for Sebastian Schweikert. Yet, his aim is not sculptural rigor. Rather, he strives for a flamboyant sculptural gesture that defies eternal truths with playful nonchalance. A final point of Schweikert's strategy of figurative sculpture that holds on to nothing, yet exists, concerns format. Even if architects and urban planners claim otherwise, in the twenty-first century size has become the measure of things. Large halls have taken the place of sacred halls. And Sebastian Schweikert's sculptural statements take this into account.

And Michelangelo? Schweikert knows art history like hardly any sculptor of his generation. He knows the connotations of long, slender men, of stone, of titles, but is not afraid of pathos, pose or irony. His club can therefore afford to pretend that Buonarroti is just a cool name.

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