

PRESS RELEASE

Valentin Carron
Haus und Kropf

September 9 – October 25, 2023

Opening on Friday, September 8, 12 – 7 pm, and Saturday, September 9, 12 – 6 pm

Lichtenfelsgasse 5, A-1010 Vienna

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present *Haus und Kropf*, the gallery's ninth exhibition with the Swiss artist Valentin Carron.

Although there were attempts in the 20th century to increasingly incorporate the immaterial into art, as the examples of Marcel Duchamp or Mark Rothko show, the binding of art to its materials remains a fundamental prerequisite. This applies all the more to sculpture, for it is always a setting in that reality which man and society can produce, change, or destroy. Until a few decades ago, three categories were considered the standard for the attitude of a sculptor: to the first belonged the aspect of modeling (with the classical materials of stone, wood and bronze), to the second the use of industrially produced materials and to the last, finally, the inclusion of found materials of any kind. In a further step, some artists have appropriated works by colleagues in the sense of Appropriation Art and placed them into new contexts.

Since the beginning of the 21st century at the latest, artists like Valentin Carron have been departing from such norms, not because they have lost their significance, but because they no longer want to be bound by categorical constraints. Rather, it is a matter of using and, if necessary, varying the extensive achievements, depending on individual, artistic needs. This also includes the expansion of possibilities in terms of the medium. Valentin Carron is one of those versatile artists who works off his respective focal points of interest in the areas of sculpture, painting and video art, even though works in the first medium are among the most concise forms of his artistic exploration.

While individual works in the early phase of his creative work tended to follow the process of appropriation, the following years saw, among other things, assemblage-like relief works up to the most recent group of works of figures, the series "Innocent", which are shown in the exhibition *Haus und Kropf*. In the modulated models made of plaster, later transformed into bronze, the limbs are often elastic and thus appear elastic, and thus fragile; the physiognomies also testify, despite the rather stylistic execution, to a physical as well as psychological vulnerability. The figures are reminiscent of grotesque depictions by a Jacques Callot or the beggar sculptures by the Renaissance artist Donatello, which deliberately hide an idealized physical infirmity that is still valid today. The word *Kropf* ("goiter") in the exhibition's title stands metaphorically for physical abnormalities. In Carron's models for the later sculptural versions, the figures are assigned everyday attributes that often appear incidental, such as a walking stick, a ping-pong paddle, or wool for hair, which are later also cast in bronze. This classical materiality of sculpture gives the fragile figures a sublime character that understands their condition, suggested by the artist, as an essential condition of our social situation.

In addition to the pictorial works, Carron presents in the exhibition *Haus und Kropf* the series of paintings "La casa e il cane" in different painterly versions, in which on the one hand a constructive, but then again and again a gestural moment dominates. Motivically, strongly stylized houses are in the foreground, accompanied by a dog. The borrowings from the buildings are recognizable despite their reduction: among others, from barns and entrances of hardware stores. The depiction of the dog is ambivalent: it seems like a foreign body and is at the same time a unifying compositional element in the picture. For thousands of years, the dog has been considered an important companion of man; in numerous mythologies, haunting human souls appear in canine forms. However, this is not a transformation in the true sense of the word, but rather conveys that man is a dog in his inner nature, merely leaving his shell. Man as well as dog try to adapt to the respective given circumstances of their environment, sometimes as a lone wolf, then as a herd animal.

Oliver Zybok

GALERIE EVA PRESENHUBER

Valentin Carron was born in 1977 in Martigny, CH, where he lives and works. Carron has been the subject of recent solo exhibitions at institutions including Museum im Bellpark, Kriens, CH (2021–2022); Le Consortium, Dijon, FR (2020); Galerie Art & Essai, Rennes, FR (2018), Centre d'édition contemporaine, Geneva, CH (2016); Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, CH (2014); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR (2010); La Conservera Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Ceuti/Murcia, ES (2009); and Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich, CH (2007). In 2013, Carron represented Switzerland at the 55th Venice Biennale. Recent institutional group exhibitions include *Konkrete Gegenwart, Jetzt ist immer auch ein bisschen gestern und morgen*, Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, CH (2019); *Spring Sale Time*, Centre d'Édition Contemporaine, Geneva, CH (2019); *SI ONSITE*, Swiss Institute Contemporary Art, New York, US (2018); *Coup de Foudre*, Maison van Doesburg, Meudon, FR (2017); *On half a tank of gas*, Swiss Institute Contemporary Art, New York, US (2017); *La velocità delle immagini*, Istituto Svizzero di Rome, Rome, IT (2016); and *Work Hard: Selections by Valentin Carron*, a group exhibition curated by Valentin Carron, Swiss Institute Contemporary Art, New York, US (2015).

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