

In its 50th anniversary year, the Kaiserring of the city of Goslar was awarded to Katharina Fritsch. The artist, born in 1956 in Essen, has redefined the concept of sculpture. As early as the 1980s, she was part of the Düsseldorf art scene alongside figures such as Thomas Schütte and Reinhard Mucha, a scene that played a defining role in the art of the time.

Fritsch achieved international recognition while still a student of Fritz Schwegler, through her participation in the groundbreaking 1984 exhibition *Von hier aus* in Düsseldorf. (...) Her 1987 work *Elefant* secured her place in art history. This large-scale sculpture is a deceptive apparition—an extraordinary creation with a powerful presence in its monochromatic green color.

In the same year, she presented a life-sized yellow plastic version of the Lourdes Madonna in the city center as part of the Skulptur Projekte Münster. (...) In 1995, for the Venice Biennale, she demonstrated her vision of art with her *Museum*, offering a striking conceptual model.

Fritsch's figurative sculptures exist within a peculiar tension between proximity and distance. At first glance, much of her work appears mundane, yet it quickly shifts into the opposite due to an exaggerated role distribution between man and woman, human and animal, good and evil. This interplay appears absurd, and when multiplied, it generates a sense of the uncanny. Astonishment and disquiet lie closely intertwined. Works such as *Rattenkönig* (1993) possess an extreme clarity, yet they resist complete interpretation. They are modeled after living humans and animals, yet they remain fictional. They oscillate between the extremes of artificiality and naturalism, reflecting the ambivalence of the 1980s and 1990s—an era marked by drugs, AIDS, alcohol, and a pervasive sense of existential anxiety.

*Tischgesellschaft* (1988) presents a disconcerting portrait of contemporary society, while simultaneously portraying the contradictory image of a solitary man seated at a table, gazing into the distance as if contemplating the state of the world. (...)

In 2013, with her *Blue Cock* on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square, London, Fritsch offered a satirical commentary on the gray, heroic figures with their overt displays of masculine posturing that dominate the surrounding pedestals.

Since the early stages of her career, she has created editions featuring small objects such as a golden ear of corn, a black snake, or a white brain—each carefully assigned its distinct color. Over the years, these objects have grown in scale and complexity, becoming increasingly ambiguous and imbued with an almost superhuman force that eludes interpretation. *Muschel* transitions from a found object to a form of cowrie shell currency, to a symbol of female sexuality, ultimately culminating in 2024 as a towering black, upright structure—closed and resistant to deciphering. (...)

Helga Meister