

Alexander Polzin

Sculptor, Painter, Stage Designer and Director

Born in East Berlin in 1973, Alexander Polzin originally trained as a stonemason. He launched his international career as a sculptor, painter and stage designer in 1991, building on the success of his first exhibition in Berlin's Kulturhaus Pankow four years earlier. In 1994 Polzin was invited by Dr. Gary Smith, founding director of the recently-established Einstein Forum in Potsdam, to present the first exhibition of solo work at the Institute: *Arbeiten im Einstein Forum*. The introduction to the exhibition catalogue was written by the eminent art historian Professor Hans Belting. Polzin's series of paintings, *Monster*, appeared in a collection of images and essays edited by the pioneering American cultural historian, Sander Gilman, published in 1995.

The following year Polzin became Artist-in-Residence at the International Artists House in Herzliya, Israel, an appointment marked by the creation of the towering granite sculpture, *Der Steinhändler*. He has held residencies at ETH Zurich (1998), Montalvo Arts Center in Saratoga, California (2004), and the Centre for Advanced Study at the Käte Hamburger Collegium for Research in the Humanities in Bonn (2010/11). Polzin has also been a visiting professor at ETH Zurich and the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Polzin's sculptures and paintings can be seen today in public spaces and galleries across the world like: Berlin, Bucharest, Jerusalem, New York, Los Angeles and Paris. Major exhibitions of his work have been presented at the Getty Center, Los Angeles (2000); Budapest, Bucharest and Naples (2001); Berlin's Institute of Advanced Studies (2004); Bard College, New York (2006); San Francisco International Arts Festival (2008), Teatro Real, Madrid (2011), Salzburg Easter Festival and Anna Akhmatova Museum, St. Petersburg. His most recent solo exhibitions were held in London in 2015 (Maestro Arts) and Berlin in 2014 (Galerie Kornfeld). In January 2015 solo exhibitions of his work were shown at Grand Théâtre de Genève to coincide with his designs for *Iphigénie en Tauride* and the Kunstmuseum Ahrenshoop showed *Aus meinem Augenfenster, Hommage an Thomas Brasch*. In 2015 his artworks were exhibited at the Vatican Museums, Rome, dedicated to the work of Cardinal Bolesław Kominek. The exhibition has been shown in House of Representatives, Berlin and City Museum, Wrocław. An exhibition of his work focussed around his friendship with György Kurtág was featured at the Aldeburgh Festival in June 2016.

His public sculptures include *The Fallen Angel* for Collegium Helveticum, Zürich; *Giordano Bruno Monument* in Berlin's Potsdamer Platz; *Socrates* for Tel Aviv University, and *The Couple*, for the foyer of the Opéra national de Paris, Bastille. In May 2016 a memorial sculpture to Paul Celan was unveiled by the mayor of Paris in the Anne Frank Garden. A second sculpture will be sited at the Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem.

In his speech to Polzin's exhibition *The Age of Anxiety*, the Nobel Prize-winning author Imre Kertész described the artist's 99 intimate depictions of fear as a "good framework to overcome, at least in our minds, the Age of Anxiety which showed its terrible face...on 11 September 2001". Others have written of the fear-defeating qualities and of the struggle between transcendence and immanence in Polzin's art.

Polzin has worked extensively as a stage designer for dance, opera and theatre. His designs have been created for, among others, the Teatro Real Madrid (Pilar Jurado, *La página en blanco*, 2011, *The Conquest of Mexico*, 2013 and *Lohengrin*, February 2014), Salzburg Easter Festival and Beijing Music Festival, (*Parsifal*, 2013). Polzin's pictorial representation of Bernstein's second symphony *The Age of Anxiety* for Aarhus Symphony Orchestra and a visualisation of Grieg's *Peer Gynt* for Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, were premiered in 2014.

He made his directing debut at the Tiroler Festspiele Erl with *Fidelio* also in 2014; in 2015 Polzin designed a new production of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* for Grand Théâtre de Genève and Mauricio Sotelo's *El público* received its world premiere at Teatro Real Madrid. In June 2016, Grand Théâtre de Genève presented Polzin's new production of Verdi's *Falstaff* at its temporary home, L'Opéra des Nations.

La Monnaie / De Munt closed their 2017-18 season with Verdi's *Aida* featuring set designs by Polzin. He returned to Brussels in May 2019 to design a new production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (La Monnaie/Teatro Comunale di Bologna. As well as the set designs Polzin worked in partnership with the director, Ralf Pleger, on the artistic concept of the production.

Other recent work includes the co-creation of a new project entitled *Love in Fragments*. Working alongside Alban Gerhardt, Gergana Gergova and Sommer Ulrickson the artists investigate aspects of love through music, movement, and art. The production premiered at the 92Y in New York in March 2019. Performances in 2019-20 include the European premiere in March 2020 in Lyon.