

**Press release**January 15th  
March 12th, 2022Opening  
Saturday, January 15th  
from 11am to 8pm

# *The Trembling of the Veil*

## Stefan Rinck

It is easy to imagine Stefan Rinck's sculptures in some far off, distant future. Decades or centuries from now, I envision Rinck's strange stone creatures in an overgrown forest clearing as the earth reclaims the built environment once we are gone. Moss covered and rain-worn, they will continue to stand enduringly as totemic emblems of a long-lost human race, revealing more mystical truths about our lives, hopes, and dreams than even a shattered iPhone screen or rusting automotive chassis. Dreaming up this scenario highlights how timeless Rinck's work is—a central quality of his oeuvre. His sculptures feel as if they have already existed for eons and will persist after time ceases to be recorded by our species.

As Rinck started to use his carving skills to creative and artistic ends, he began to contemplate the medium's ability to communicate with others through finished works of art. He quickly learned that this dialogue went in both directions. If an artwork he created could speak to others outside his immediate circle and extend beyond an art world audience, he could also find meaning and inspiration for his creativity in a vast array of material from other places and times. His artistic ambition, formal nuance, and conception of an artwork's potential began to be influenced by a variety of sources, including more traditional and classical material for academic sculptures, like the forms created by antique sculptors and medieval stone workers, as well as a pan-artistic lineage of Egyptian hieroglyphs, Aztec stone forms, and the ritual carvings of indigenous cultures. As Rinck's interest in these varied sources grew, without judgement or consideration of hierarchy, he was also encouraged to incorporate other interests into his burgeoning artistic worldview, such as post-war comics, fantasy fiction and contemporary emoji-like forms.

His technique is as essential to the meaning of his finished sculptures as their content. It is also completely central to who he is as an artist and person. His sculptures begin as massive stone blocks of weighing upwards of twenty tons that have been pulled from the quarry. The heaviness and rough, hulking forms of these materials reflect his own physique with his large hands, broad shoulders, and square features. Before he sets to carving, Rinck contemplates the block of stone. Considering its merits and features, he incorporates the structure of the rock into what will develop into the final form of his sculpture. He understands stone carving with an accepting manner that is almost Taoist and embraces the technical and structural qualities of the stone as they present themselves to him, rather than working against them. He must be deeply contemplative of elements and concepts that do not even have words in our language and can't be fully articulated—the way a piece of stone will respond to varying forces from different angles of a chisel; where the grain of the stone is more or less likely to respond to pressure; how to keep the stone from fragmenting along a vein; where it will be softer; and where it will resist. These bits of knowledge are a type of expertise that he feels in his fingertips and throughout his body.

Rinck's finished artworks show how he relishes this carving process. He leaves the marks that openly display the techniques used to achieve the final form. Rather than polish sandstone—which would be a fundamental irony, given the grainy quality that gives the sedimentary rock its name—he embraces a roughness in the completed work that results from the accumulation of his actions. At times a pattern of gouged lines indicates where a pneumatic drill has

## Press release

January 15th  
March 12th, 2022

Opening  
Saturday, January 15th  
from 11am to 8pm

been pushed forward repeatedly. Other portions offer a dot-like terrain with a stippled surface that results from the more pointed repetition of hammer and chisel blows. Of course, there are also flat expanses, which show the rotary marks of his work with the discs of angle grinders. Collectively, these and other carving techniques are mobilized to produce formal complexities that conjure up a compelling interplay of shadow and light across the surfaces of the work, but also create the costumes and teeth, hair, eyes of his figures. Their physical features are at once abstract, technical, and mimetic—like ritual masks, folk illustrations or cartoon figures.

The resulting characters have an almost totemic quality to them, like the way idols and fetishes represent the truest essence of their cultures. They are awkward creatures with squat, sturdy proportions, like trolls or other folk figures. His sculptures sometimes evoke animals like crocodiles or mammoths, creatures that appear personified in mythology or figures from comics. Rinck's representations have archetypal characteristics that allow his art to achieve universalizing, superstitious ends, and emphasize the qualities storytelling, imagination, and wonderment that unite us across any divide. They contain an almost magical dimension, like children's drawings solidified and enlarged to a monumental scale.

Rinck's works are like visitors to our era, who have been formed by an amalgamation of the past and the foreign. They speak with a quiet yet stoic voice. A voice that will resonate with future audiences in contexts we can scarcely imagine today.

Daniel S. Palmer

This text has been adapted from his essay published in *Pleased to meet you* Stefan Rinck, 2021, Semiose editions