

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

1062 North Orange Grove, Los Angeles, California 90046 323-654-1830 matthewmarks.com



FINE ART

With Surprising Sculptures, Katharina Fritsch Makes The Familiar Fun

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SUSAN STAMBERG



Hahn/Cock by Katharina Fritsch was unveiled in London's Trafalgar Square on July 25, 2013. The giant rooster sculpture has since been relocated to the roof of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Will Oliver/AFP via Getty Images

German sculptor Katharina Fritsch has a thing for roosters. She's responsible for the giant blue one perched atop the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., overlooking Constitution Avenue. "It brings joy, you know, to the capital," she says.

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Why roosters? They intrigue her; she finds them interesting and sociable. “They have a language — they have 30 sounds for food,” she explains.

In February, one of Fritsch’s roosters flew to the Matthew Marks Gallery in Los Angeles to preside at her first one-person show there. Her large, surprising and funny sculptures were supposed to be on public view right now, but the gallery is closed because of the coronavirus. So here’s a virtual visit to the show, which I was lucky to see in person before the city shut its doors.

The 13-foot, bright blue rooster stands on its own circular, lime green pedestal. Fritsch loves using color — ultramarine blue, red, black. “Adding the color gives a very emotional aspect,” she explains. “People are always attracted by color. Some art historians would say that it’s childish or something like that. I don’t think so.”



Hahn und Podest/Cock and Pedestal (2013/2019) and Zwei Männer/Two Men (2019).

Ivo Faber/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn/Matthew Marks Gallery



Zwei Männer/Two Men, 2019

Ivo Faber/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn/Matthew Marks Gallery

The rooster is made of polyester and steel and sprayed with blue acrylic paint — matte, no shine. And facing it — dwarfed (maybe roostered) by it — stand two life-size sculpted men. They wear tight pants, sturdy shoes and long jackets, stylish enough for a big city. The men don't seem to care about the big rooster right in front of them.

“They are looking at their iPhones ... their beloved iPhones,” Fritsch says with a laugh. Twenty-first-century men, absorbed in their technology.

With her perfect smooth surfaces and dry humor, Fritsch takes ordinary people, familiar objects, and turns them into art.

Her Los Angeles exhibition was planned to be on view until May 2, but the gallery remains closed. In the meantime, you can see the sculptures for yourself on the Matthew Marks website.