



## The Art of Revelation

Sculptor, painter and stage designer **Alexander Polzin's** art uncovers living forms from the depths of inanimate materials. This autumn sees a landmark exhibition of his captivating work in London, a group show in St. Petersburg, his designs for *Parsifal* in Beijing and the premiere of the first of two new opera productions for Madrid's Teatro Real 2013/14 season.

"I believe that when an artwork has left its maker's workshop, it develops – it must develop – a highly independent life of its own." Alexander Polzin, May 2013

Alexander Polzin's international reputation is set to deepen further this autumn with the first exhibition of his work to be presented in London and the unveiling in Madrid of his set designs for Wolfgang Rihm's *Die Eroberung von Mexico*. The sculptor, painter and stage designer is the subject of a retrospective at Maestro Arts Gallery at Riverside Quarter in Wandsworth from 11 October to 20 November. Visitors to the Thameside space will be able to view a broad spectrum of Polzin's paintings and sculptures, including mixed-media silks of his designs for Wagner's *Parsifal* at this year's Salzburg Easter Festival; a selection of works from his intimate exploration of fear, *The Age of Anxiety*; paintings created for the Teatro Real Madrid's 2013/14 season brochure; several maquettes for the artist's sculptures, and paintings of the legendary opera singer Maria Callas.

"I hope this exhibition will show the different angles and some of the connections with other artforms that are part of my work," comments Polzin. "With sculpture and painting, it is always important for me that something of the work should remain and hold on in time. Hidden qualities are very important in creating this sense of evolving time in art that appears to be fixed in the moment. I believe the 'truth' is multi-layered and should be contained beneath the surface of a work of art: there is no longer any single truth; rather, there is an endless combination of truths. Only the view through all these layers can give the whole picture of a very complex world. This is what I hope people will sense when they see my work in London."

The enduring power of Polzin's work is clear in his latest set designs, created for *Die Eroberung von Mexico* ('The Conquest of Mexico'). Rihm's opera, completed soon after the first Gulf War in 1991, deals with armed invasion, colonial hegemony and the clash of cultures. Those themes are reflected in and transcended by Polzin's sculptural scenography, which will be seen in a new production staged by Pierre Audi for Teatro Real Madrid between 9 and 19 October 2013. Other highlights arising from Polzin's busy schedule for 2013/14 include a group show 'Freunde des Unsinn's' (Friends of Nonsense') at the Anna Achmatova Museum in St. Petersburg (24 September-1 October) then Berlin in April 2014, a display of his work presented by Galerie Kornfeld, Berlin for CONTEXT Art Miami (3-8 December) and the first showing of his set designs for Wagner's *Lohengrin* in a new production at Teatro Real Madrid (3-27 April 2014).

Alexander Polzin's aesthetic outlook is informed by his deep immersion in modern literature and contemporary classical music. The artist traces his love for literature and theatre back to his early years in East Germany. "The focus on writers in the former GDR [the German Democratic Republic] was enormous," he recalls. "If you were interested in the real world, politics and society, then writers were the best

messengers. I always looked for dialogue partners in other creative fields and was able to be present at a young age in rehearsals of the dramatist, poet and theatre director Heiner Müller. And I learned so much after meeting the composer Helmut Lachenmann, whose work taught me about the need always to question the materials you're using."

Many of Polzin's works have been inspired by musical compositions and literary texts. *The Age of Anxiety* (1999), a series of ninety-nine paintings and several sculptures exploring different states of fear was influenced by W.H. Auden's eponymous poem, while *Parthenope* (2012) stands as a sculptural meditation on the myth of Odysseus and the music of Helmut Lachenmann. His five-figured sculpture *Requiem* (2010), written in homage and dedicated to the Hungarian composer György Kurtág, is the subject of a collection of essays by such esteemed poets, novelists and essayists as Péter Esterházy, Peter Stephan Jungk and Moshe Zuckermann. Several composers, Kurtág and Mauricio Sotelo among them, have dedicated scores to him.

"The work I'm currently doing for a visual interpretation of Pierre Boulez's *Notations* is very interesting and in a totally dangerous field for me," observes Polzin. "His music is great in itself and doesn't need anything. So the challenge of working with music and creating stage designs comes back to the question of time and how to bring a sense of it into a painting or sculpture. Now I recognise the way in which music can change the way people look at a work over time and how a material object can transform how people listen to a piece of music."

<http://www.maestroarts.com>

**For press enquiries, please contact:**

Valerie Barber PR

Suite 2

9a St John's Wood High Street

London NW8 7NG

Tel: +44 (0)20 7586 8560

[sabina@vbpr.co.uk](mailto:sabina@vbpr.co.uk)

[www.vbpr.co.uk](http://www.vbpr.co.uk)

**Notes for Editors**

Alexander Polzin, born in East Berlin in 1973, trained as a stonemason and first displayed his prodigious creative talents at the age of fourteen with an exhibition at Berlin's Kulturhaus-Pankow. He launched his freelance career as sculptor and artist in 1991 with the unveiling of *Socrates*, a sculpture created for Tel Aviv University. Three years later his works were selected for the first solo exhibition held at the newly created Einstein Forum in Potsdam and, in 1996, he became Artist-in-Residence at the International Artists House in Herzliya near Tel Aviv. Polzin's appointment there led to the creation of *Der Steinhändler*, a massive sculpture cut from a solid block of granite. Other public sculptures include *The Fallen Angel* for the Collegium Helveticum, Zurich; the *Giordano Bruno Monument* in Berlin's Potsdamer Platz; a memorial stone for the Hungarian writer and theatre director George Tabori, and *The Couple*, commissioned for the foyer of the Opéra National de Bastille. Polzin's sculptures are all cast by Marc Krepp, one of Europe's finest bronze cast manufacturers.

His prolific collaboration with musicians and opera directors began after the composer and conductor Konstantia Gourzi persuaded Polzin to explore the combination of sculpture and music. In 2003 he supplied the set designs for Haydn's marionette opera *Philemon and Baucis* and subsequently worked on new productions of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (2008), Verdi's *Rigoletto* (2009) and the world premiere staging of Pilar Jurado's *La página en blanco* (2011). Polzin returned to *Philemon and Baucis* in 2010 for the Berlin Staatsoper's new staging and also designed sets and costumes for Moritz Gagern's music theatre piece *Lovesick* for Berlin's Neuköllner Oper. Polzin's designs for Salzburg Easter Festival's production of *Parsifal* return to the stage on 29 and 31 October as part of the Beijing Music Festival. The production is scheduled for revivals at the Teatro Real Madrid in 2016 and Dresden's Semper Oper the following year. Polzin, observed the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 'demonstrates [with *Parsifal*] that opera can also be sculptural'.

Alexander Polzin is represented worldwide by Maestro Arts ([www.maestroarts.com](http://www.maestroarts.com)).