

INTRODUCTION

Exhibitions of contemporary art rarely get as prolonged or thorough a preparation as this one. Thanks to the meticulous planning, the last three years have turned out to be a wonderful and very enjoyable collaboration between the Kunsthause and the artist.

This book is the outcome of a partnership between curator Bice Curiger and Katharina Fritsch, and is more than just documentation of an unusual exhibition. Works were selected and grouped in close collaboration so as to provide a comprehensive survey of the extensive output of Katharina Fritsch over the last three decades and up to the present day.

What has always distinguished this artist is how much she packs into her pictures, sculptures, and installations. Many of her works are three-dimensional and large. But they instantly imprint themselves sharply in our visual memories, not just because of their size (an elephant's quite okay, too) but because she reduces nature with meticulous precision to archetypal shapes while at the same time dramatizing it in the form of large-scale tableaux, in an extraordinary synthesis of artistic concept and craft precision. Curiosity, delight in experimentation, and irony are the ingredients that captivate us as viewers, and they have inspired the joint project from the first minute.

We were able to rely on Bice Curiger's years of experience and excellent interpersonal skills with contemporary artists from the moment we first made contact and unexpectedly found ourselves in a creative process with the artist. In short, it was a great pleasure for everyone at the Kunsthause to be working on the project with Katharina Fritsch over such a lengthy period. Apart from a short interruption for family reasons, Sandra Haldi accompanied the two with calm efficiency, and together with colleagues at the Kunsthause ensured that everything went off without hassle.

As our partner for contemporary art, Swiss Re is sponsoring the Katharina Fritsch exhibition. There's nothing automatic about that, as we know, and yet it is an expression of Swiss Re's real identification with culture. The company has, perhaps more than almost any other, manifested a long and successful international commitment to art as part of its corporate identity. That long-term

approach pays off for both sides, and it has been a pleasure for us at the Kunsthaus to be able to put on large-scale, ambitious projects time and again jointly with Swiss Re. We are indeed grateful to its management and staff, who have turned this unusual cultural commitment into the reality of our partnership, particularly to Anne Keller for her confidence and dedication.

As mentioned earlier, this book is more than just documentation, since it reflects the quality standard of the artist's work. Along with an abundance of illustrations spanning her entire oeuvre, it contains a series of articles. Written by Bice Curiger, Suzanne Hudson, and Milovan Farronato, also Robert Fleck of the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg (the next stop for the exhibition), they look at the oeuvre from various angles.

And finally, from me and all of us, our sincere thanks to Katharina Fritsch—for everything!

Christoph Becker