

Roger Ballen – A Journey through the Ballenesque

8 June – 26 August 2023

Christophe Guye Galerie is thrilled to announce Roger Ballen's second solo exhibition 'A Journey through the Ballenesque' at the gallery. The exhibition shows works from five different series – 'Colour Work', 'The Theatre of Apparitions', 'Asylum of the Birds', 'Boarding House' and 'Shadow Chamber' – and explores some of the key stages of Ballen's creative journey. After photographing exclusively in black and white for more than fifty years, Ballen recently became interested in making works in colour, a selection of which is being shown in the exhibition as a premiere in Switzerland. Furthermore, an entire section of the gallery is dedicated to the series 'The Theater of Apparitions', whereby the works are shown for the first time after this year's Venice Biennale as light boxes in a darkened space plus the pertaining video. In addition, some of the most important key works from the series 'Asylum of the Birds' are on display, of which a few are currently exhibited at the Tinguely Museum Basel as part of the exhibition 'Call of the Void'. A further highlight of the exhibition is a selection of vintage prints from the series 'Boarding House' and 'Shadow Chamber', which have never been published before.

Born in 1950 in New York City, Roger Ballen has lived in South Africa since 1982 and is one of the most important photographers of his generation. His oeuvre, which spans five decades, began with the documentary photography field but evolved into the creation of distinctive fictionalized realms that also integrate the mediums of film, installation, theatre, sculpture, painting and drawing. Ballen describes his works as 'existential psychodramas' that touch the subconscious mind and evoke the underbelly of the human condition. They aim to break through the repressed thoughts and feelings by engaging him in themes of chaos and order, madness or unruly states of being, the human relationship to the animal world, life and death, universal archetypes of the psyche and experiences of otherness. Through his unique, complex visual language, and universal and profound themes, the artist has made a lasting contribution to the field of art.

Roger Ballen has published over 25 books internationally and has collections in the most prominent museums in the world. His most recent publication is entitled 'Roger the Rat' and was published by Hatje Cantz in 2020. In 2017 Thames and Hudson published his book 'Ballenesque, Roger Ballen – A Retrospective', a major retrospective of his collected works. Recently Thames and Hudson released a second volume in paperback. Ballen has also been the creator of several acclaimed and exhibited short films that dovetail with his photographic series. In 2022, he was one of the artists that represented South African at the Venice Biennale Arte 2022. He is also the founder and executive director of the Inside Out Centre for the Arts in Johannesburg, which opened to the public in March 2023. The Centre aims to promote an awareness of African related issues through exhibitions and educational programmes. Its first show, entitled 'End of the Game', explores the decimation of wildlife in Africa both through historical artefacts and Ballen's photographs and installations.