



Buddha – Barlach. Photographs by KOBIN YUKAWA

“There is nothing more divine than the Buddhist statues in Japanese and Indian temples.” (Ernst Barlach, Letter to Wolf-Dieter Zimmermann, 12.2.1933).

The exhibition is under the patronage of H.E. Toshiyuki Takano,
Ambassador of Japan to the Federal Republic of Germany.

The exhibition “Buddha – Barlach. Photographs by Kobin Yukawa“ came about as a direct follow-up project of the comprehensive “Ernst Barlach Retrospective“ that was shown in Kyoto, Tokyo and Yamanashi in 2006. For many years now, Kobin Yukawa’s artistic work has been focusing on the photography of sacral figures in the temples of the historic city of Kamakura, where he also resides. Due to many publications his photographs have become known and famous throughout Japan.

Trained to be a cameraman the photographer Kobin Yukawa stages the holy figures and images of deities. He dramatizes by means of effective but never sensational lighting, bold cropping and unusual vantage points. Some figures seem unusually real, almost human: Buddha becomes the wise scholar and the Guardian Deity the fighting Samurai. All this takes place without damaging the holy charisma of the images of the deities, quite the contrary: It spreads an aura of the sacral that detaches itself from the profanities.

Now, Kobin Yukawa has tackled Ernst Barlach, a sculptor with great affinities to the Far East and to Western Late Medieval sculptures. Throughout his entire life Barlach, the expressionist, was seeking to “reveal the soul” and striving to “depict “the external portrayal of an internal process”.

In 1906 Barlach formulated as follows: “Simplification and monumentalisation create for me the concept of eternal ideas”. He could only achieve this by

keeping consequently to the human image. Barlach transformed and abstracted but never became abstract. In a way, he followed a contrary path to the sculptors of the Kamakura-Period, or the Late Gothic Masters, who by means of heightening realism found the divine in the individual. Their aim, however, was the same. Yukawa recognized this and documented this in his expressive photographs. With his camera Kobin Yukawa celebrates a high form of Japanese aesthetics and with this follows the century old tradition of his culture and even more so with his photographs of the works of the German expressionist Ernst Barlach.

A joint venture project of the Ernst Barlach Stiftung Güstrow and Ernst Barlach Hauses – Stiftung Hermann F. Reemtsma Hamburg.

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