

GALERIE LEU

Pressrelease

Bertil Vallien

No Man's Land

September 9th - October 15th, 2022

Opening: Thursday, September 8th, 5-8 pm



Bertil Vallien No Man's Land – Galerie Leu presents the world-famous Swedish glass artist's first solo exhibition in Germany.

Bertil Vallien is one of the most famous glass artists in Sweden and the world - and one of the most popular Swedish artists in general. Since the 1960s he has worked primarily with glass as a sculptural material, with a visual language based on eternal human symbols.

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In a career spanning more than sixty years, Vallien has realized numerous highly acclaimed exhibitions both in Sweden and internationally. His art is represented in leading institutions and private collections around the world, not least in the United States, where Vallien began his career and is a household name.

Strangely enough, Bertil Vallien has remained a relatively unknown name in the art scene in Germany to this day. Although he is represented in renowned German private collections as well as in important public collections in Hamburg, Düsseldorf and Munich, No Man's Land, a retrospective of Vallien's work over the last decade, is his first Solo exhibition in Germany.

The exhibition includes the series "Under the Surface", mysterious landscapes "frozen" in glass cubes, alongside some of Bertil Vallien's world-famous sand-cast glass ships. Other exhibits include "Resting Heads", sleeping women's heads, "Kafka", a series of wall sculptures with crudely designed faces, and "Ashes and Diamonds", frighteningly topical destroyed and burnt cityscapes interspersed with hopefully sparkling "diamonds".

"We live in a time when the future of the world is at stake, and if you want you can see a catastrophic theme in the works," says Bertil Vallien. "Neither glass nor diamonds have eternal life. On the contrary compared to other gemstones, diamonds are not refractory and disappear without a trace at temperatures above 700 degrees. The stairway is a main theme, the stairway to the unknown. What the characters have in common is that they are somewhere else, on their way to something, in No Man's Land. "

Through his Swedish mother, Mathias Leu was familiar with the art of Bertil Vallien from an early age. During a visit to the Galleri Glas in Stockholm and later to the Kosta glassworks in Glasriket in Småland in southern Sweden, it occurred to him that it would be interesting to present Bertil Vallien to the German art public.

"It's about time! When we realized that his work had never been exhibited in Germany, ideas started to evolve quickly," says Leu. "Since we're a fine art gallery, the exhibition will naturally focus on his unique sculptural work, which, I think, absolutely addresses relevant contemporary issues. They draw their inspiration not only from the wondrous realm of nature, but also from the vast body of myths and legends that has been created over the centuries. Vallien's ships, for example, are containers of messages and metaphors for human existence. They explore universal themes such as life's journey, the unknown destination, and the contingency of existence. "

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Bertil Vallien was born in 1938 in Stockholm. He was trained as a ceramist at Konstfack in Stockholm and continued his education in Mexico and Los Angeles. His career as a radical ceramic artist began in New York. After returning to Sweden, Bertil Vallien lived and worked for more than half a century with his wife Ulrica Hydman Vallien in Åfors, in the heart of Swedish Glasriket, where he still resides today. Bertil Vallien has been associated with the Kosta Boda glassworks, which is also a

partner of the exhibition, since the 1960s. Bertil Vallien is represented in many leading international museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, the National Museum in Stockholm, and the Chicago Art Institute and the Neue Sammlung in Munich . He has received numerous prestigious prizes and awards, including the Swedish Academy Gold Medal and the Prince Eugen Medal. In the summer of 2021, Bertil Vallien presented a highly acclaimed exhibition in the park of the royal summer residence Solliden on the Swedish island of Öland.

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Please contact the gallery for any further information and press material!

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images:

Resting Head, sand-casted glass, 25 x 39 x 29 cm

Bertil Vallien in his Studio at Kosta Boda

King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia help cast one of Bertil Vallien's world-famous glass ships at the historic glassworks in Kosta in 2017. "It's always great to see Kosta Boda's work out in the world," says German-born Queen Silvia "The brand stands for quality and inventiveness and is held in high esteem."