

An abstract painting by Thaddaeus Ropac, featuring a dark, textured background with a central, vibrant, and chaotic composition of colors including yellow, orange, red, blue, purple, and white. The composition is framed by a white, hand-drawn rectangular border. The overall style is expressive and gestural, with visible brushstrokes and splatters.

Georg Baselitz
Freitag war es schön

Salzburg Villa Kast
1 April—25 May 2021

Thaddaeus Ropac

London Paris Salzburg

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1 April—25 May 2021
Opening: Thursday 1 April 5—8pm

Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg
ropac.net

Georg Baselitz's new series of works comprises portraits of his wife Elke, whose image has occupied a prominent position in the development of his practice for over 50 years. Created in his new studio in Austria, this series shows Elke enthroned on a stage-like construction against an unusually neutral background. Her figure stands out, pastose and multipartite, evoking existentialist connotations through her solitary suspension in the undefined space.

The works reveal Baselitz's ongoing conceptual exploration of his personal style, as well as subtle art-historical references, such as allusions to German Expressionism, French Art Informel and the freedom of American abstract painting. Baselitz intensifies the intimacy and sensuousness of his motif in the heightened abstraction he achieves through his technique. The works were created through the transfer of colour, thereby evoking associations with Andy Warhol's series of *Rorschach paintings* and *Blotted Line Drawings*, as well as with Roy Lichtenstein's frozen *Brushstrokes*. He introduces an element of chance into his compositions and offers a reflection on the meaning of painting itself.

Baselitz defamiliarises and abstracts his subject; however, due to the expressiveness of the representation, this forfeits nothing of its narrative effect. Elke's dominating physical presence is presented to the viewer in a variety of colourations; sometimes polychromatic on a white surface, sometimes golden yellow on a dark canvas. As early as the 1960s, in the course of his visits to Paris, Baselitz saw the works of Jean Fautrier, Jean Dubuffet, Eugène Leroy and Wols and was fascinated by them. The material aesthetics of these artists have continued to influence Baselitz's practice ever since, which is particularly evident in this new series of works.

In addition to the portraits, the exhibition presents a series of fire-gilded bronze feet, a subject which is another constant in the canon of Baselitz's motifs. Even very early groups of works, such as the *P.D. Füße* series (1960–63), show serial variations on the subject. These representations of feet reveal the combination of personal experience and a historical view of the apocalyptic world of post-war Germany. For Baselitz, feet, as signifying direct contact with the earth, also symbolise a connection with his historical roots: *I have created from this a philosophy which states that my contact does not reach upwards to heaven. In Christian Europe, this is the only contact. The one reaching downwards – to hell – is something that causes fear. My contact reaches downwards. I am a northern Alpine being, not to say a Teuton.*

Following recent comprehensive exhibitions at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. and the Fondation Beyeler in Riehen, near Basel, to mark Baselitz's 80th birthday in 2018, the Centre Pompidou in Paris will present the artist's largest retrospective to date in 2021. This year will also see solo exhibitions at the Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova and the Palazzo Grimani in Venice, as well as the artist's acceptance into the Académie des beaux-arts in France.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Didier Ottinger, Deputy Director of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris and curator of the acclaimed monographic Francis Bacon show in 2019.

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