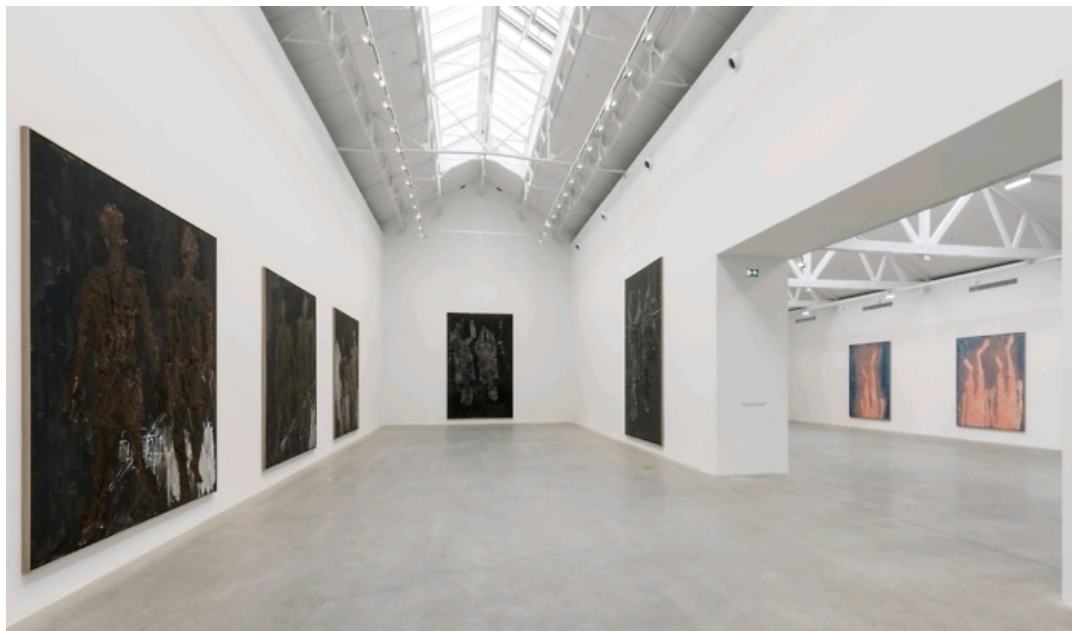

GEORG BASELITZ

DESCENTE

PARIS PANTIN

02 Apr 2017 - 01 Jul 2017

**Opening: Sunday 2 April 2017, 1-5 pm**

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by German artist Georg Baselitz in the Paris Pantin space. Titled *Descente* (Down), it brings together new paintings and works on paper.

The exhibition comprises five groups of works that are stylistically and iconographically linked to the fragmented self-portraits known as the *Avignon* series, which was shown at the 2015 Venice Biennale. Two of Baselitz's concerns were the notions of "late work" and "age", with particular reference to the historical decision of the city of Avignon to reject the donation of a series of late works by Picasso.

In 2017, one year before Baselitz's 80th birthday, these themes are still relevant, as he has recently stated: "I have been looking at Picasso's late works. Avignon. [...] At the time Picasso had reached his lowest point. Nobody wanted these later paintings. Arman and Christo did their thing in Paris whereas Picasso was absent. If you're getting old you keep asking yourself: Am I still part of it, or are the others already ahead of me?"

In this new exhibition Baselitz shows different groups of works: a series, which directly refer to Marcel Duchamp's iconic painting *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912), abstract-like portraits of painter Ferdinand von Rayski from Dresden, works that reference Otto Dix's painting *Die Eltern des Künstlers* (The Artist's Parents) (1924), sensitive yet unyielding portraits of his wife Elke as well as works that revisit his own painting *Die Großen Freunde* (The Great Friends) (1965). The works echo each other, offering an impressive insight into the intimate settings that have become characteristic of his practice in the last years.

Asked about his self-referential motifs, Baselitz has recently stated: "Over the years my working process has been rather restricted. Essentially, I became more and more lonely in my painting. I kept sinking into myself, and everything I do, is being pulled out of myself. I live with old catalogues, with old photos, and do nothing else. I paint in-between myself and myself and about the both of us. That's it. From time to time we're joined by someone like Otto Dix, whom I greatly admire."

In these new works Baselitz touches upon his childhood and youth, his artistic beginnings, the characters of his Dresden homeland as well as his wife Elke and the artist himself. In the last years he has always stayed close to his own iconography, yet in these works he radically innovates his painting process. First Baselitz creates a high-contrast image in two layers. He then uses a spatula to apply a mass of white and impasto oil-paint, thereby creating a relief effect: "And then I make drawings inside that white mass. Physiognomies and the like. With something akin to a reed-pen. And then the whole thing is being concealed. Blurred by a kind of mist. It's being neutralized. It's being put back. In the past it was like this: an efficient picture is a picture, where everything is right. The format is right, the contrast is right, the outline is right. If you paint a picture black, it's not efficient, but what is it then? It's the *attitude* of a picture, or the *allure* of a picture. It is a kind of *subtext*. I have decided to make *inefficient* pictures." (Georg Baselitz)

Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) is generally considered to be a departure from painting, an ending, and at the same time a new beginning. Baselitz considers this work as *being completely stolen from Picasso*. He had already been looking at the persona of Duchamp in a series of humorous and erotic portrayals of him and his chambermaid dating from 1999 and 2007. Through these works he opposes artistic subjectivity to Duchamp's conceptual take: "At one point I realized that this is nonsense. Art is subjective and deals with itself and with the artist. The artist is the most important part in art. He [Duchamp] has marked an ending. And he also did it philosophically. The end of the world is his last painting. Of course there were, during Duchamp's time, still Picasso and others who were happy to keep on painting. The deciding factor in art, however, is the subjective, the individual. And if you don't want to deal with it, it is going to be politics or philosophy or an event. This is a rule, a lesson I have experienced personally. Whenever I noticed I was unsettling people, I looked at them and realised that it's them and not me, they want something I cannot sign. They want to patronise me. With dogma, with ideologies." (Georg Baselitz).

Last year, the Städel Museum in Frankfurt held an important exhibition of almost all the works of Baselitz's legendary series *Helden* (Heroes) and *Neue Typen* (New Types), which are now widely regarded as key examples of German art of the 1960s. The Frankfurt exhibition included the largest work of that series, *Die Großen Freunde* (The Great Friends) from 1965, which Baselitz revisits in the Pantin exhibition. Regarding this self-referencing process Baselitz has recently stated: "It's all no longer decent, I painted them the way I painted in 1962. I took umbra and black. I think these are five beautiful pictures. They drift a little, they blur a bit, but since the framework is already known, the viewer blends this with what he's seen before. They no longer look like broken heroes. Yes, they are quite aggressive. With this colour it has all become very aggressive."

Georg Baselitz was born in 1938 as Hans-Georg Kern in Deutschbaselitz near Dresden. Today he lives and works in four different places: Basel,

Lake Ammersee (Bavaria), Salzburg and Imperia (Liguria, Italy). His work, which developed from the field of tension between the reception of German Abstract Expressionism, on the one hand, and the ease of American painting (Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning), on the other hand, has left its mark on international art since 1960. Paintings that deal with the German past, such as his *Heldenbilder* (Heroes series), as well as his *Fingermalereien* (Finger Paintings), *Frakturbilder* (Fracture Paintings), and *Russenbilder* (Russian Paintings) are part of renowned museum collections worldwide. At the end of the 1960s Baselitz started turning his paintings upside down, stressing how pictorial means prime over the subject. The result is a unique form of simultaneous figuration and abstraction. His urge for permanent change is also present in his late work. Since 2006 he has been working on the so-called *Remix Paintings*, where he freely re-examines the iconography of his own past works. Baselitz represented Germany at the Venice Biennale in 1980 and took part, in 1972, 1977 and 1982, at the Documenta 5, 6 and 7 in Kassel. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York was the first to show a comprehensive retrospective of the artist's work in 1995, an exhibition that then travelled to Los Angeles County Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC, the Nationalgalerie Berlin and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. In 2007 the Royal Academy of Art in London organized a further significant retrospective. In 2006 and 2007 the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich and the Albertina in Vienna presented the *Remix Paintings* series for the first time. In 2011-12 the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris held a retrospective of Baselitz's sculptural work. In 2014 the Haus der Kunst in Munich held a large solo exhibition, showing his *Schwarzen Bilder* (Black Paintings) and black-patinated bronze sculptures for the first time in an institutional setting. The year 2015 was marked by the presentation of his *Avignon* series at the Venice Biennale. In 2016 an exhibition juxtaposed the work of Georg Baselitz and Emilio Vedova at the Museum Küppersmühle in Duisburg. The Museum Jorn in Silkeborg, Denmark held an exhibition of works from Baselitz's own collection. That same year an exhibition of the *Heldenbilder* (Hero Paintings) and the *Neue Typen* (New Types series) took place at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt. This exhibition travelled to the Moderna Museet, Stockholm, is currently on view at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome and will later be presented at the Guggenheim, Bilbao.

This year's exhibitions include a solo show at the National Gallery of Budapest. On the occasion of Georg Baselitz's 80th birthday in January 2018 the Beyeler Foundation will present a comprehensive monographic exhibition of his works in Riehen, near Basel.

The exhibition catalogue features an essay by Florian Illies.

[WATCH THE EXHIBITION VIDEO](#)