

GEORG BASELITZ

VANITAS

PARIS MARAIS

22 Feb 2014 - 03 May 2014



The Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Drawing Space is presenting a series of pen and ink drawings and watercolours by celebrated German painter and sculptor Georg Baselitz. The unifying element of this powerful series is the repeated presence of human bones, which evokes the Vanitas theme with great expressive force.

This exhibition in the Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Drawing Space is a sequel to the exhibition devoted to Georg Baselitz at Pantin in 2013. Several bronze sculptures were displayed in that show along with paintings and with series of drawings, a juxtaposition intended to complete our understanding of how forms come into being in the artist's mind. The spectator was aware of human shapes gradually being projected into a kind of abstraction. A tangling of bodies was brought about with rings gradually coiling themselves around solid forms. The high point of the exhibition was achieved when *Zero Ende* was displayed. It was a more than three-metre long log of wood lying on the floor with a human skull carved out of it at each end and rings of wood connecting the skulls like so many bones. The piece picks up all the implications of the Vanitas genre: living beings confronted with their own limits, their frailty and the equality of all in the face of death.

The inks and watercolours in the Drawing Space exhibition open up with renewed expressive force questions that have been asked throughout the history of art. Bodies pile up in tangles, attempting to fight against the separation that death brings; sometimes in pairs, sometimes alone, like a totem being charged with spiritual strength. This series of drawings is a fine example of the artist's ability to extend the limits of figurative representation while still flirting with abstraction and conserving for his subjects the expressive power of forms stretched to their limit.

Georg Baselitz was born 23 January 1938, as Hans-Georg Kern, in Deutschbaselitz (Saxony). His work has always expressed his reactions to human traumas and the tragedies of German history. Baselitz has been greatly influenced by outsider art, by the writings and drawings of Antonin Artaud and by African sculpture. Since the 1960s, Baselitz's works have featured in many international monographic and group exhibitions.

Baselitz represented Germany at the 1980 Venice Biennale. He was present at *documenta* 5, 6, & 7 in Kassel in 1972, 1977 and 1982. The Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York, presented the first comprehensive retrospective in 1995, which then toured to Los Angeles County Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C., the Nationalgalerie, Berlin and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Another significant retrospective was organised by the Royal Academy of Art, London, in 2007. The Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, and the Albertina, Vienna, were the first to present the *Remix* cycle. There was a retrospective of his sculptural works at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris from September 2011 to June 2012, followed, in 2013, by a vast retrospective at the Essl Museum, Vienna, to mark the occasion of his 75th birthday.

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