

Press release

Georg Baselitz

adler barfuß

18 May—20 July 2024
Opening Saturday 18 May 2024, 11am—1pm

Thaddaeus Ropac
Salzburg Villa Kast
Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg



Georg Baselitz, *Sigmund ist von der Berggasse 19 in Wien nach 20 Maresfield Gardens nach London gezogen*, 2024.
Oil on canvas. 300 x 450 cm (118.11 x 177.17 in).

Created in the artist's studio north of Salzburg, this new series of paintings and ink drawings features eagles – a motif that has resurfaced in Georg Baselitz's oeuvre throughout his life. Depicted in tactile, multicoloured impasto, the works feature eagles rendered in gestural strokes, larger than life, hovering in an undefined space. Seemingly weightless, they appear to float against varying backgrounds of blue, in hues reminiscent of works by Lucas Cranach the Elder or 'the beach paintings that Picasso created in Dinard, in Brittany, in the 1920s'

as Andreas Zimmermann, curator of the celebrated exhibition *Georg Baselitz: Naked Masters* (2023) at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, writes in the accompanying exhibition catalogue. The eagles are perched or in flight, conveying a sense of the vigour with which they were painted. Baselitz uses spatulas rather than paint brushes, producing marks that recall 'middle and late period Rembrandt and, even more so, pen and ink drawings by Hokusai. [...] Filigree and powerful at once: a typical Baselitz paradox.'

In two paintings, Baselitz depicts birds against a lighter, slate blue backdrop, grounded by a web of colour streaks that stretches across the canvas in zigzag lines. The eagles in these works prominently feature applications of cut-out plastic circles as eyes – a method that Baselitz has only recently adopted and which was inspired by Hannah Höch’s collages.

The two largest works in the exhibition each show a pair of birds in flight on a monumental scale, their wings spread almost 3 metres wide across the canvas. The birds are depicted against a mountain range and thereby directly refer back to the artist’s first ever rendition of the subject. Painted at the young age of 15, one of Baselitz’s earliest works likewise shows two eagles in flight over mountains and, as Zimmermann observes, ‘the importance Baselitz attaches to this early work, done when he was still a schoolboy, is evident from the fact that over the decades he has repeatedly returned to it.’



Hans-Georg Kern [Georg Baselitz], *Adler*, 1953.
Pencil and watercolour on paper. 27.7 x 38.1 cm (10.91 x 15 in).

Since the 1960s, Georg Baselitz has consistently renewed his practice through innovative formal developments, often responding to art history and his own extensive oeuvre. While Baselitz’s painting technique has been subject to constant transformation, his thematic vocabulary revolves around a number of key subjects that run through his oeuvre like a golden thread and notably include portraits of his wife, Elke. The return to the highly symbolic motif of the eagle in this most recent series integrates a wide range of historical and art-historical references into his work, including Rembrandt’s



Georg Baselitz, *Kein Bergwerk*, 2023.
Oil and application on canvas.
270 x 230 cm (106.3 x 90.55 in).

iconic depiction of Ganymede, in the collection of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden, which Baselitz was familiar with from a young age. ‘The eagle embodies qualities that have fuelled the human imagination for thousands of years,’ writes Zimmermann, and its great significance as a heraldic symbol in German history further plays into the backdrop of Baselitz’s repeated examination of this subject.

Baselitz’s works can almost always be tied to his experiences and impressions during his childhood in Dresden and the ensuing formative years he spent in Berlin. By revisiting the motifs of his past, Baselitz offers a reflection on the significance of painting itself. Asked about this self-referentiality, he stated: ‘I kept sinking into myself, and everything I do is being pulled out of myself.’

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Andreas Zimmermann, curator of the acclaimed Georg Baselitz exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, in 2023.



About the artist

Georg Baselitz, who has worked with the gallery for over 20 years, lives between Lake Ammersee in Bavaria, Salzburg, and Imperia in Liguria, Italy. Early in his career, his work was included in documenta 5 (1972) and 7 (1982). Following the 1980 Venice Biennale, he participated in a series of influential exhibitions: *A New Spirit in Painting* (1981) and *German Art in the Twentieth Century* (1985) at the Royal Academy of Arts, London; and *Zeitgeist* (1982) at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, presented his first comprehensive retrospective in the United States in 1995, which toured to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C. and Nationalgalerie, Berlin. Further significant retrospectives were organised by the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, in 1996, and the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in 2007. In 2006 and 2007, the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, and the Albertina, Vienna, were the first to present his *Remix* cycle.

A retrospective of Baselitz's sculptures was held at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (2011–12) and his *Avignon* series was presented at the Venice Biennale in 2015. His *Heldenbilder* (*Hero Paintings*) and *Neue Typen* (*New Types*) were shown at the Städel Museum, Frankfurt (2016), travelling to the Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome; and

Guggenheim Bilbao. To mark the artist's 80th birthday in 2018, comprehensive solo exhibitions were held at the Fondation Beyeler, Basel; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; and Musée Unterlinden, Colmar, France. In 2019, he was elected to the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris and became the first living artist to have an exhibition at the Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice. This was followed by his largest retrospective to date at the Centre Pompidou, Paris in 2021–22.

In 2023, numerous exhibitions were held at prestigious institutions internationally in celebration of the artist's 85th birthday. Among them are a six-decade retrospective of his drawings at The Morgan Library, New York, which travelled to the Albertina, Vienna; an exhibition of Baselitz's works presented alongside those of Anselm Kiefer at the Kunsten Museum of Modern Art Aalborg (the first exhibition to present a visual dialogue between the two artists since the Venice Biennale in 1980); and individual presentations at the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München at the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Museum Würth 2, Künzelsau; and Serpentine Galleries, London.

The exhibition in Salzburg will coincide with the artist's solo show at the Galleria degli Antichi in Sabbioneta (until 24 November 2024).

For press enquiries:

Dr. Patricia Neusser
Thaddaeus Ropac Salzburg
patricia.neusser@ropac.net
Telefon: +43 662 881393 0



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