

GEORG BASELITZ

100 DRAWINGS

Exhibition Facts

Duration	7. Juni – 17. September 2023
Venue	Tietze Galleries ALBERTINA
Curator	Antonia Hoerschelmann
Catalogue	Available for EUR 29,90 (English & German) onsite at the Museum Shop as well as via https://shop.albertina.at/en/
Opening Hours	Daily 10 am – 6 pm Except Wednesday and Friday open until 9 pm
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Georg Baselitz

100 Drawings

7.6.2023 – 17.9.2023

The works of Georg Baselitz are among the most coveted works in the international art market. In 2022, the artist gifted 50 drawings, watercolors, and gouaches to the ALBERTINA. These works come from a collection that the artist had kept for himself. Both the ALBERTINA and the partner museum of the exhibition, The Morgan Library in New York, were allowed to select 50 pieces each. Georg Baselitz's generous donation to the represents one of the most significant enrichments of the ALBERTINA's collection in recent years. This donation aligns with other generous gifts of graphic works by renowned artists such as Alex Katz, Jim Dine, or Sean Scully. Thanks to this donation by Baselitz and the previously entrusted works—the ALBERTINA undoubtedly ranks among the most extensive collections of the German artist's works worldwide.

With his unique oeuvre, Georg Baselitz has significantly shaped art since 1945 by literally turning conventional notions and conventions upside down. This showing's retrospective selection of works allows one to easily retrace the path that Baselitz has forged in search of a new method of depiction, a method situated “where nobody has been before,” as the artist himself has put it. Though Baselitz starts from representational motifs, it remains emphatically evident just how much abstraction he employs in his thinking and artistic execution in order to arrive at an original creative language. To this end, the artist also devotes intensive study to art history, which his initial instinct is to aggressively oppose, to resist—a rebellious stance that begets the development of his revolutionary visual creations. Here, one is impressed upon realizing how his reversal of motifs represents a logical step towards liberating himself from content in order to focus on fundamental questions of pictorial design.

The chronological scope of the exhibition encompasses early to recently created works, highlighting the importance of drawing in the artist's overall body of work: it is autonomous yet thematically connected to the paintings. " I've always done my drawings separately. They

have the same story in them, the same figure, and the same content, but they are independent of the paintings," says the artist. Each individual work on paper represents a unique artistic challenge for Baselitz, employing a variety of materials such as pencil, ink, watercolor, or pastel. Immerse yourself in the world of the exhibition "Georg Baselitz. 100 drawings," offering a rare opportunity to closely observe the oeuvre of one of the most significant artists of our time.

Curator: Dr. Antonia Hoerschelmann.

Exhibition Texts

This exhibition is dedicated to Georg Baselitz (b. 1938) and his generous donation of 100 of his own outstanding and seminal works on paper to the Albertina Museum and the Morgan Library. Both museums were invited to freely choose 50 of them each for their collections.

Georg Baselitz's oeuvre has played a significant role in shaping, or rather, radically upending art history after 1945. His artistic search for a new method of representation, which, as he put it, is "where no one has been before", is illustrated in all its radicalness and consistency in this retrospective selection of works. Even if Baselitz starts out from real-life subjects, it becomes clearly evident how much abstraction he brings to bear on his thinking and artistic execution in order to find an original visual language. The artist also delves into art history for the purpose, going aggressively against and resisting it at first only to make this rebellious attitude the launching pad for revolutionizing pictorial inventions. It is an impressive insight into how turning motifs upside down marks a logical step to rid himself of content and focus instead on the fundamental questions of pictorial design. Since 2006, the artist has made a deliberate point of revisiting his own early works and reinterpreting them ever anew.

The arc spans from early to most recent works, which also indicate the significance of drawings in the artist's oeuvre: They are autonomous but still related to his paintings in motif. Far from being mere sketches or preliminary drawings, they show how Baselitz takes on a specific artistic challenge in every single one of these works on paper. In the process, he uses a broad palette of materials from pencil and India ink to watercolors and pastels.

Early Drawings

Georg Baselitz's childhood, youth, and first time as a student in East-Berlin had a lasting formative effect and made him a critical artist. Expelled from art academy in 1956 on grounds of "sociopolitical immaturity," he continued his studies in West-Berlin in the following year. One year later, he relocated to the West for good. Baselitz's early work is informed by a differentiated interrogation of—mainly German—politics, society, and history. The basis of his work is permanent exploration of artistic possibilities and the quest for "new" images.

This is, for example, how the *Fracture Pictures* came to be created, in which the artist dissects the motif represented, thereby relativizing both the unity of the pictorial space and the significance of the subject matter.

In 1965, a stay in Florence provided an opportunity for Baselitz to study the art of the Mannerists of the 16th century, whose anticlassical attitude kindled his interest. The unnatural proportions and exalted postures of Mannerist figures found entrance in his work, particularly in the pictures of *Heroes* and *New Types* who, as workers, shepherds, or rebels, stand for the issues of his generation.

Upside Down

In 1969, Baselitz's quest for a new pictorial thinking led to the inversion of motifs. "Turning the picture upside down for me was proof that what is real is the picture, an object turned on its head is suitable for painting because it is unsuitable as an object." By turning pictorial motifs on their heads, Georg Baselitz has inscribed himself in 20th-century art history. He has been creating such works for decades now, calling his approach "the best way to strip what is painted of content" and "to turn to painting as such." By radically breaking with convention, he compels viewers to abandon their long-accustomed viewing habits. The subject of the picture is, in a way, "neutralized." This enables Baselitz to take an independent position between the poles of figuration and abstraction.

Motif Pictures

Everyday situations and objects provide the basis of the *Motif Pictures*. They demonstrate, in mostly scratchy ink, pencil, and charcoal strokes, how easily activities or objects of everyday life—drinking, eating, looking out the window, riding a bicycle, a flower vase, or a bottle—can be reduced to a few, ultimately geometric basic shapes. For Baselitz, it is "good to have a motif. For one thing, you treat it just like any other memory; and for another, you're not again faced with fresh problems. The exterior is like one's own inner self."

A New Expressionism

From the 1970s on, Baselitz's style is characterized by energetic, expressive lines. The approach recalled the early twentieth-century art of the German Expressionists, whose works impressed Baselitz for their gestural handling and vibrant colors. He is equally fascinated by the works of the Norwegian Edvard Munch, who also becomes an important influence for the artists of the Brücke. Fascinated by the tristesse in Munch's works, by the inner tension and restlessness they convey, and by their fleeting and fragmentary nature, Baselitz has been profoundly impressed by the oeuvre of his Norwegian role model as a painter from the 1980s onward.

Pastoral and Fight Motifs

Under the umbrella title of *Pastoral*, seventy drawings and two paintings were created between July 1985 and March 1986, showing motifs of Arcadian idylls of the bright day and dreamlike enchanted nocturnes. In them, Baselitz drew on earlier motifs dating back to the 1960s. During the same period, he also took up the same or similar motifs relating to other subjects such as the *Fight Motifs*. Ever since the early 1970s, Baselitz has dated his drawings to the day, so that the sequence of their creation can be traced like entries in a diary. What the drawings of this period have in common is an energetic, almost aggressive stroke. It is the deep black of charcoal that dominates here, suggesting spatial depth and strength, and combined at times with pencil, watercolor, ink, or pastel.

Remix

After 2000, Baselitz increasingly concerned himself with history as well as with the context of his own biography and artistic past. The concept of the *Remix* must be seen in the tradition of the series of painting by Monet and Munch who sought to gradually explore a subject in all its nuances through minimal variations of color choice, perspective, or painterly expression. Baselitz borrowed the term from music and studio technology where it refers to the rearrangement and re-recording of given musical motifs and melodies. Unlike in his early painting and drawings, which are characterized by gravity, pathos, and mixed colors, the *Remix* pictures are informed by lightness, transparency, and pure, lighter colors. The artist's

creative motivation is not the interpretation of subject matter, but infinite technical, stylistic, and formal variation. His own oeuvre is not only revisited with respect to quality and topicality but reinterpreted from the ground up.

Late Drawings

From 2016 onwards, the shape-defining contour lines of figures and heads in Baselitz's drawings are once again reduced. In their jagged and edgy determination and clarity, they convey a sense of, at once, vulnerability, strength, and presence. They establish a tension-charged, individual atmosphere: a pictorial space without spatiality, figures without corporeality, weight without heaviness. This radical reduction to the ink drawing generates an all-pervading and formative intensity of representation.

Press images

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Georg Baselitz
The Modern Painter, 1965
Graphite on paper, 40 × 26 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna – Gift of the Georg and Elke Baselitz Family
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Photo: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin



Georg Baselitz
Torso, 1966
Graphite on paper, 55 × 44 cm
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Georg Baselitz
Pious Man, 1983
Watercolor and charcoal on paper, 62 × 43 cm
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Georg Baselitz
My Yellow Period, 1997
Gouache and ink on paper, 76 × 57 cm
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Georg Baselitz
Back to School Days, 2005
 Ink, watercolor and gouache on paper,
 100 × 70 cm
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 Photo: George Meister, Munich, courtesy
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Georg Baselitz
Untitled, 2006
 Ink and watercolor on paper, 66,5 × 50,5 cm
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Georg Baselitz
Eagle (Remix), 2007
 Ink and watercolor on paper, 67 × 51 cm
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Georg Baselitz
Dogs of Mourning, 2010
 Ink and watercolor on paper, 66 × 51,2 cm
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