FONDATION **BEYELER**

Media release

Georg Baselitz

January 21 – April 29, 2018

The Fondation Beyeler is devoting its first exhibition in 2018 to the German painter, printmaker and sculptor Georg Baselitz (b. 1938 in Deutschbaselitz, Saxony), whose work occupies a central position in the art of our time. The exhibition, marking the artist's eightieth birthday, takes the form of an extensive retrospective, comprising many of the most important paintings and sculptures created by Baselitz over the past six decades. These include loans from renowned public and private collections in Europe and the USA, some of which have not been seen in public for many years. The exhibition begins at the end of January 2018 at the Fondation Beyeler and will be shown in the summer in a modified form at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. Baselitz exhibitions are rare events in Switzerland and the USA. The last monographic exhibition of Baselitz's work in Switzerland took place in 1990 at the Kunsthaus Zürich. In the USA, the present exhibition will be the first North American retrospective since the major show in 1995 at the Guggenheim Museum, which subsequently traveled to the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, and to further venues.

The focus of the exhibition is on Baselitz as an artist who is deeply rooted in the history of European and American painting, and who is seen as the originator of an outstandingly inventive pictorial language. His artistic idiom, which he has continued to develop and refine throughout his career, draws on a rich repertoire of iconographic and stylistic models, appropriated in ways that translate these disparate elements into multi-layered and ambivalent structures of meaning. Baselitz's artistic cosmos is like a hall of mirrors in which remembered and imagined images continually blend with art-historical models and precedents to form new compositions. In a world of digital and projected images, Baselitz is especially concerned with the sensuous quality of the work of art. Since his beginnings in the early 1960s, his work has consistently testified to the importance and affective power of painting. This is one of the reasons why his art has retained its freshness and contemporary appeal through the past decades.

The exhibition has been organized in close cooperation with the artist. In the choice of works and the manner of presentation, the guiding aim is to make visible the essence of Baselitz's oeuvre, through the juxtaposition of paintings and sculptures from every phase of his artistic development. The unique scope of his formal and thematic inventiveness becomes strikingly apparent in the chronological sequence of the works selected for the exhibition, bringing together visual worlds that may appear heterogeneous at first glance but exercise a collective fascination that keeps the viewer under an incessant spell. This experience plays a key part in ensuring that Baselitz's multifaceted art—even in the case of works created thirty or forty years ago— continues to pose an aesthetic and intellectual challenge.

The exhibition, devised for the Fondation Beyeler by Martin Schwander, curator at large, assembles some ninety paintings and twelve sculptures from the years 1959 to 2017. Key works from the 1960s are featured, with a selection of the *Hero* and *Fracture* paintings, such as *Various Signs,* together with examples of the inverted images—including *Portrait of Elke I*— for which Baselitz became famous in the 1970s. In addition to large-format wood sculptures, such as *Women of Dresden* and painted reliefs, the selection includes a number of pictures from the *Remix* series. Paintings and outdoor and indoor sculptures from the last two decades complete the survey of the work of a supremely original contemporary artist. The exhibition itinerary concludes with a new group of works created in the fall of 2017 and publicly displayed here for the first time.

The exhibition catalogue, published in German and English, reflects a range of perspectives on Baselitz's richly varied work, with new academic contributions from distinguished European and American authors.

In addition, the well-known German film-maker and author Alexander Kluge (b. 1932 in Halberstadt, Saxony-Anhalt) has created a film tribute to his artist friend Georg Baselitz, which will be receiving its premiere in our exhibition. A fifteen-minute film by Heinz Peter Schwerfel, made in the fall of 2017 and also shown for the first time in the exhibition at the Fondation Beyeler, provides insights into Baselitz's way of thinking and working.

In conjunction with the exhibition at the Fondation Beyeler, the Kunstmuseum Basel is presenting a selection of Baselitz's drawings.

#BaselitzBasel

The exhibition "Georg Baselitz" is supported by:
Beyeler-Stiftung
Hansjörg Wyss, Wyss Foundation

Prof. Dr. Dr. Herbert Batliner

Press images: are available for download at www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/media/press-images

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Fondation Beyeler opening hours: Monday to Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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Media release

Georg Baselitz

January 21 – April 29, 2018

At the beginning of 2018, the Fondation Beyeler is devoting an extensive exhibition to the work of Georg Baselitz (b. 1938 in Deutschbaselitz, Saxony), which occupies a central position in the art of our time. The exhibition, marking the artist's eightieth birthday, takes the form of a focused retrospective, bringing together many of the most important paintings and sculptures created by Baselitz over the past six decades, but also including new works that have not been shown in public before.

Baselitz is one of the few contemporary artists whose work is deeply rooted in the history of European and American painting. He is seen as the inventor of a figurative pictorial language that draws on a rich repertoire of iconographic and stylistic elements, although these, in his visual inventions, take on conflicting and ambivalent meanings. Baselitz's artistic cosmos is like a hall of mirrors in which original, remembered and imagined images blend with art-historical models and precedents to form new and striking compositions.

The powerful and exciting works in the exhibition, from every phase of the artist's career, reveal the full thematic and stylistic range of his exceptional oeuvre. Key works from the 1960s, with a selection of the *Hero* and *Fracture* paintings, will feature in the exhibition, together with examples of the inverted images for which Baselitz became famous in the 1970s and 80s. A selection of the artist's large-format wood sculptures will include his first exercise in this medium: the painted wood piece that caused a political scandal when it was exhibited at the 1980 Venice Biennale. Paintings from the later *Remix* series and from recent years complete the survey of the work of one of the most original artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The retrospective assembles some ninety paintings and twelve sculptures from 1959 to the present day, with loans from renowned public and private collections in Europe and the USA.

The exhibition has been organized in cooperation with the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC, where it will be shown subsequently in a modified form. In parallel with the presentation at the Fondation Beyeler, the Kunstmuseum Basel will be exhibiting a selection of Baselitz's works on paper.

#BaselitzBasel

The exhibition «Georg Baselitz» is being supported by:
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Baselitz

January 21 – April 29, 2018

01 Georg Baselit
***Fingermalerei – Adler,* 1972**
Finger Painting—Eagle
Oil on canvas, 250 x 180 cm
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Pinakothek der Moderne, Wittelsbacher Ausgleichsfonds, Munich
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: © Bayer&Mitko—ARTOTHEK

02 Georg Baselitz
***Sommermorgen,* 1964**
Summer Morning
Oil on canvas, 162 x 130 cm
MKM Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, Duisburg, Ströher Collection
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Galerie Michael Werner, Cologne

03 Georg Baselitz
***Oberon (1. Orthodoxer Salon 64 – E. Neijsvestnij),* 1964**
Oberon (1st Orthodox Salon 64—E. Neizvestny)
Oil on canvas, 250 x 200 cm
Städel Museum, Frankfurt on the Main
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: © Städel Museum—ARTOTHEK

04 Georg Baselitz
***Verschiedene Zeichen,* 1965**
Various Signs
Oil on canvas, 162.5 x 130 cm
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Robert Bayer, Basel

05 Georg Baselitz
***B für Larry,* 1967**
B for Larry
Oil on canvas, 250 x 190 cm
Friedrich Christian Flick Collection
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: St. Rötheli, Zurich

06 Georg Baselitz
***Porträt Elke I,* 1969**
Portrait of Elke I
Synthetic resin on canvas, 162 x 130 cm
Privately owned
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin

FONDATION **BEYELER**

Baselitz

January 21 – April 29, 2018

07 Georg Baselitz
***Schlafzimmer,* 1975**
Bedroom
Oil and charcoal on canvas, 250 x 200 cm
Privately owned
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin

08 Georg Baselitz
***Stilleben,* 1976–77**
Still Life
Oil on canvas, 250 x 200 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Agnes Gund, 1991
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: © 2017. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

09 Georg Baselitz
***Die Ährenleserin,* 1978**
The Gleaner
Oil and tempera on canvas, 330 x 250 cm
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, purchased with funds contributed by Robert and Meryl Meltzer, 1987
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Courtesy Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

10 Georg Baselitz
***Orangenesser (IX),* 1981**
Orange Eater (IX)
Oil and tempera on canvas, 146 x 114 cm
Skarstedt, New York
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Friedrich Rosenstiel, Cologne

11 Georg Baselitz
***Weg vom Fenster,* 1982**
Away from the Window
Oil on canvas, 250 x 250 cm
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Robert Bayer, Basel

12 Georg Baselitz
***Avignon ade,* 2017**
Oil on canvas, 480 x 300 cm
Privately owned
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin

13 Georg Baselitz
***Der Brückechor,* 1983**
The Brücke Chorus
Oil on canvas, 280 x 450 cm
Private collection
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: © 2014 Christie's Images Limited

14 Georg Baselitz
***Dystopisches Paar,* 2015**
Dystopian Couple
Oil on canvas, 400 x 600 cm
Courtesy of the artist and White Cube
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin

FONDATION **BEYELER**

Baselitz

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15 Georg Baselitz
***Dresdner Frauen – Karla,* 1990**
Women of Dresden—Karla
Ash wood and tempera, 158 x 67.5 x 57 cm
Froehlich Collection, Stuttgart
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin

16 Georg Baselitz
***Meine neue Mütze,* 2003**
My New Hat
Cedarwood and oil paint, 310.5 x 83.5 x 107 cm
Pinault Collection
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin

17 Georg Baselitz
***Frau Ultramarin,* 2004**
Mrs. Ultramarine
Cedarwood and oil paint, 295.5 x 94 x 107 cm
DASMAXIMUM KunstGegenwart, Traunreut
© Georg Baselitz, 2018
Photo: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin

18 **Georg Baselitz in his studio in West Berlin, 1962**
Photo: © Elke Baselitz 2018

19 **Georg Baselitz in his studio at Schloss Derneburg, 1983**
Photo: © Daniel Blau, Munich

20 **Ernst Beyeler and Georg Baselitz, Schloss Derneburg, 1985**
Photo: © Daniel Blau, Munich

21 **Georg Baselitz and Enst Beyeler, 1992**
Photographer unknown

22 **Georg Baselitz in his studio, 2014**
Photo: Peter Knaup, Berlin

Biography

1938 Born January 23 in Deutschbaselitz, in Saxony, Germany, and given the name Hans-Georg Bruno Kern.

1956 Admitted to the Hochschule für bildende und angewandte Kunst, in East Berlin, where he studies painting with Walter Womacka and Herbert Behrens-Hangeler.

1957 Obliged to leave the Hochschule after two terms because of "sociopolitical immaturity." Continues studies with Hann Trier at the Hochschule für bildende Künste in West Berlin, graduating from the master-class in 1963.

1960 Paints the so-called *Rayski* portraits, his first "official" works.

1961 Adopts the artist's name Georg Baselitz, after his birthplace. Has exhibition with Eugen Schönebeck in Berlin-Charlottenburg, accompanied by the "Erstes Pandämonisches Manifest" ("First Pandemonic Manifesto").

1962 Marries Elke Kretzschmar and their son Daniel is born.

1963 First solo exhibition at Galerie Werner & Katz, in Berlin, immediately causes a scandal. Of the works exhibited, *Die grosse Nacht im Eimer* (*The Big Night Down the Drain,* 1962–63) and *Der nackte Mann* (*The Naked Man,* 1962) are confiscated by the state attorney's office; the ensuing trial does not end until 1965, when the pictures are returned.

1964 Makes his first etchings, in the printing workshop of Schloss Wolfsburg, Lower Saxony.

1965 Receives scholarship to the Villa Romana, in Florence.
Has solo exhibition at Galerie Friedrich & Dahlem, in Munich.
Works on the series of *Helden* (*Heroes*) paintings in Berlin until 1966.

1966 Has solo exhibition at Galerie Rudolf Springer, in Berlin, accompanied by the manifesto "Warum das Bild *Die grossen Freunde* ein gutes Bild ist!" ("Why the Painting T*he Great Friends* is a Good Picture!").
Son Anton is born and the family moves to Osthofen, near Worms in Rhineland-Palatinate.

1968 Receives a grant from the Kulturkreis im Bundesverband der deutschen Industrie.

1969 Begins to work with inverted motifs: one of the first paintings is *Der Wald auf dem Kopf* (T*he Wood on Its Head*).

1970 Makes his museum debut with an exhibition of drawings in the Kupferstichkabinett at the Kunstmuseum Basel. Has first exhibition of pictures with inverted motifs, presented by Franz Dahlem, Galeriehaus in Lindenstrasse, in conjunction with the Cologne art fair.

1971 Moves to Forst an der Weinstrasse, in Rhineland-Palatinate.

1972 Participates in *documenta 5,* in Kassel.
Sets up a studio in Musbach, in Baden-Württemberg.

1975 Moves to Derneburg, near Hildesheim, Lower Saxony.
Participates in the 13th São Paulo Biennial.

1976 Has retrospectives at the Kunsthalle Bern; the Staatsgalerie moderner Kunst, in Munich; and the Kunsthalle Köln, in Cologne.
Sets up an additional studio in Florence until 1981.

1977 Engaged by the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste, in Karlsruhe, where he holds a professorship from 1978–83.
Withdraws his pictures from *documenta 6*, in Kassel, as a reaction against the participation of "official representative GDR painters."
Makes first large-format linocuts.

1979 Has the exhibition *Bilder 1977–1978* (Paintings 1977–1978) at the Van Abbemuseum, in Eindhoven.
Gives the lecture "Vier Wände und Oberlicht oder besser kein Bild an der Wand" ("Four Walls and Skylight, or Rather No Picture on the Wall at All") on the theme of museum buildings, at the architecture convention in Dortmund.

1980 Finishes *Strassenbild* (*Street Picture,* 1979–80), a cycle of eighteen painted panels.
Exhibits *Modell für eine Skulptur* (*Model for a Sculpture,* 1979–80), his first sculptural work, in the German Pavilion at the 39th Venice Biennale, alongside work by Anselm Kiefer.

1981 Participates in the exhibitions *A New Spirit in Painting* at the Royal Academy of Arts, in London, and *Westkunst* at the Messehalle, in Cologne.
Works on the series of *Orangenesser* (*Orange Eaters*) and *Trinker* (*Drinkers*) paintings.
Sets up an additional studio in Castiglion Fiorentino, near Arezzo, Italy, until 1987. First exhibition in New York, at Xavier Fourcade.

1982 Participates in *documenta 7,* in Kassel, and the exhibition Zeitgeist at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, in Berlin.
Intensifies his work on sculpture.

1983 Finishes the large compositions *Nachtessen in Dresden* (*Supper in Dresden*) and *Der Brückechor* (*The Brücke Chorus*).
Participates in the exhibition *Expressions: New Art from Germany,* organized by The Saint Louis Art Museum, which tours the United States.
Retrospective presented at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, in London, which is later shown at the Stedelijk Museum, in Amsterdam, and the Kunsthalle Basel. Holds professorship at the Hochschule der Künste, in Berlin, until 1988, and from 1992 to 2003.

1984 Traveling retrospective of drawings opens at the Kunstmuseum Basel. Appointed member of the Akademie der Künste, in Berlin, until 1992.

1985 In Paris, the Bibliothèque nationale shows the retrospective of his graphics, taken over from the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München and supplemented by an overview of his sculptures produced to date.
Writes the manifesto "Das Rüstzeug der Maler" ("The Painter's Equipment").

1986 Awarded the Kaiserring by the City of Goslar and the Art Prize of the Norddeutsche Landesbank, Hannover.

1987 Receives the French honor of the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.
Sets up an additional studio in Imperia, on the Italian Riviera.

1988 Completes the composition *Das Malerbild* (*The Painter's Picture*).

1989 Participates in the exhibition *Bilderstreit,* in Cologne.
Finishes *'45*, a twenty-part painting, and begins work on the monumental sculpture series *Dresdner Frauen* (*Women of Dresden*).

1990 His most comprehensive painting retrospective to date opens at the Kunsthaus Zürich and then travels to the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf.
Michael Werner publishes the artist's book *Malelade,* with poems and forty-one etchings by Baselitz.

1991 Until 1995, works on the series *Bildübereins* (*PictureOverOne*), comprising thirty-nine pictures.

1992 Presentation of the 1989 vintage of Château Mouton Rothschild, which features a label designed by Baselitz.
Receives the French honor of the Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.
Gives the lecture "Purzelbäume sind auch Bewegung und noch dazu macht es Spass" ("Somersaults Are Also Movement, and They're Fun Too") at the Münchner Podium in den Kammerspielen, in Munich, as part of the series entitled "Reden über Deutschland" ("Talking about Germany").

1993 Creates the stage design for a production of Harrison Birtwistle's opera *Punch and Judy,* commissioned by the Dutch National Opera, in Amsterdam.

1994 Writes the manifesto "Malen aus dem Kopf, auf dem Kopf oder aus dem Topf" ("Painting Out of My Head, Upside Down, Out of a Hat").
Completes the wood and cloth sculpture *Armalamor,* which in 1996 is installed in the entry hall of the newly built Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, in Frankfurt am Main.

1995 First major retrospective in the United States opens at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, in New York, which then travels to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, in Washington, DC; and the Neue Nationalgalerie, in Berlin. Begins work on a series of family portraits based on old photographs.

1996 Has major retrospective at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris. Completes the sculptures *Sentimental Holland* and *Mutter der Girlande* (*Mother of the Garland*).

1997 *Portraits of Elke* opens at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, in Texas, then travels to the North Carolina Museum of Art, in Raleigh; the Carnegie Museum of Art, in Pittsburgh; and the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey, Mexico.
The Deutsche Bank exhibits its Baselitz collection at the Moscow State Exhibition Hall "Small Manege", and thereafter at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz and the Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa.
Realizes the sculpture *Mondrians Schwester* (*Mondrian's Sister*).

1998 The Museo Rufino Tamayo presents the first survey of Baselitz's works in Mexico City.
Completes the large-format paintings *Friedrichs Frau am Abgrund* (*Friedrich's Woman on the Abyss*) and *Friedrichs Melancholie* (*Friedrich's Melancholy*) for the Reichstag, in Berlin.

1999 Has the solo exhibitions *Reise in die Niederlande, 1972–1999* (Journey to the Netherlands, 1972–1999) at the Stedelijk Museum, in Amsterdam, and *Gravures monumentales, 1977–1999* (Monumental prints, 1977–1999) at the Musée Rath, in Geneva.
Receives honorary membership of the Royal Academy of Arts, in London.
First winner of the Rhenus Kunstpreis, Mönchengladbach.

2000 Receives honorary professorship at the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts.
The exhibition *Im Walde von Blainville: Malerei 1996–2000* (*In the Woods of Blainville: Painting 1996–2000*) opens at the Sammlung Essl—Kunst der Gegenwart, in Klosterneuburg near Vienna.

2001 The exhibition *Escultura frente a pintura / Sculpture versus Painting* opens at the IVAM Centre Julio González, in Valencia; he becomes the first winner of the Julio González International Prize.

2002 Receives the French distinction of the Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.
Works on the large-scale linocut series *Belle Haleine.*

2003 *The exhibition Die monumentalen Aquarelle / Aquarelles monumentales* (Monumental watercolors) opens at the Albertina, in Vienna, then travels to Frac Picardie, in Amiens, France.
Completes the self-portrait *Meine neue Mütze* (*My New Hat*), an over-life-sized sculpture.
Receives prize for best work at the first Beijing International Art Biennale.
Awarded the Niedersächsischer Staatspreis, Hannover.

2004 Completes the over-life-sized sculpture *Frau Ultramarin* (*Mrs. Ultramarine*), a portrait sculpture of his wife.
Has retrospective at the Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, in Bonn.
Awarded the Praemium Imperiale, Tokyo.
Receives honorary professorship at the Accademia di Belle Arti, in Florence.
Works on the series of the *Negative* portraits, *Spaziergang ohne Stock* (*Stroll without a Stick*), and *Ekely.*

2005 Has joint exhibition with Benjamin Katz, *Attori a rovescio* (Actors upside down), at the Villa Faravelli, in Imperia.
Begins work on the *Remix* series.
Receives the Austrian distinction of the Österreichisches Ehrenzeichen für Wissenschaft und Kunst.

2006 Has retrospectives at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, near Copenhagen, and the Fondation de l'Hermitage, in Lausanne. The following year, the Lausanne exhibition travels in slightly modified form to the Museo d'Arte Moderna in Lugano, Switzerland.
The *Remix* exhibition opens at the Pinakothek der Moderne, in Munich, and travels the subsequent year to the Albertina, in Vienna.
Made honorary citizen of the city of Imperia.
Moves to Bavaria.

2007 The exhibition *Russenbilder* (Russian paintings) opens at the Musée d'Art moderne, in Saint-Etienne, then travels to the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul, and the Deichtorhallen, in Hamburg.
Exhibits in dialogue with Emilio Vedova in the Venetian Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale.
Has major retrospective at the Royal Academy of Arts, in London.

2008 The exhibition *23. Januar 1938* opens, and his seventieth birthday cele-bration (together with Jonathan Meese, who was born on the same day) takes place at the Contemporary Fine Arts gallery, in Berlin.
Has retrospective at the Madre, museo d'arte contemporanea Donnaregina, in Naples, and the exhibition *Baselitz: Top* at the Kunsthalle Würth, in Schwäbisch Hall.
Completes the series Mrs. Lenin and the Nightingale.

2009 The retrospective *Gemälde und Skulpturen / Painting and Sculpture: 1960–2008* opens at the Museum der Moderne Salzburg and travels thereafter in modified form to the Rudolfinum, in Prague.
Finishes the monumental sculpture *Volk Ding Zero—Folk Thing Zero.*
The exhibition *Dresdner Frauen* (Women of Dresden) opens at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister. Has parallel retrospectives *50 Jahre Malerei / 30 Jahre Skulptur* (50 years of painting / 30 years of sculpture) at the Museum Frieder Burda and the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden.

2010 *Remix* exhibition presented at the Helsinki Art Museum Tennis Palace, accompanied by photographic portraits by Benjamin Katz. Has exhibition *Pinturas recentes / Recent Paintings* at the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo.
Begins the series of *Elke* nudes, followed by the *Blaue Adler* (*Blue Eagle*) series and the double-portraits *Seid bereit, immer bereit* (*Be Prepared, Always Prepared*). Made honorary citizen of the city of Castiglion Fiorentino.

2011 Paints the series *Herfreud Grüssgott* (*Greetings, Mr. Freud*) and *In London gesucht und nichts gefunden* (*Sought in London, Nothing Found*).
Has the exhibitions *Re-Mixed* at the Kunstforeningen GL Strand, in Copenhagen; *A la pointe du trait, gravures,* a retrospective of graphics, at the Musée Cantini, in Marseille; and *Lustspiel, Neues aus dem Atelier / New Works from the Studio,* together with Arnulf Rainer, at the Arnulf Rainer Museum, in Baden near Vienna.
The Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris shows the major retrospective *Baselitz Sculpteur.*
Makes the sculpture pair *Sing Sang Zero.*

2012 Produces early in the year the large-format *Auf dem Weg nach Manchester* (*On the Way to Manchester*) and, in the spring, paintings based on color negatives.
Has the exhibition *Romantiker kaputt: Gemälde, Zeichnungen und Druckgrafik aus der Sammlung GAG* (Broken Romantic: Paintings, drawings, and prints from the GAG Collection) at the Kunstmuseum des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt, Stiftung Moritzburg, in Halle. Completes the sculpture *BDM Gruppe* (*BDM Group*), consisting of three figures, which is displayed the following summer in the garden of the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London.
Receives the French honor of the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur.

2013 *Werke von 1968 bis 2012* (*Works from 1968 to 2012*), seventy-fifth birthday exhibition opens at the Essl Museum, in Klosterneuburg near Vienna.
Works on several sculptures, the *Schwarzer Adler* (*Black Eagle*) series, and *Willem raucht nicht mehr* (*Farewell Bill*).
The exhibition *Hintergrundgeschichten* (*Background Stories*) is shown at the Residenzschloss of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, followed by *Le récit et la condensation,* a joint exhibition with Leroy at the Musée des Beaux-Arts Eugène Leroy, in Tourcoing, France, and *Besuch bei Ernst Ludwig* (*A Visit with Ernst Ludwig*) at the Kirchner Museum Davos, Switzerland.

2014 Produces the large-format self-portraits *Avignon,* which are shown at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015, and additional sculptures and paintings.
The exhibition *Tierstücke: Nicht von dieser Welt* (*Animal Pieces: Not of This World*) is presented at the Franz Marc Museum, in Kochel am See.
The major exhibition *Damals, dazwischen und heute* (*Back Then, In Between, and Today*) is shown at the Haus der Kunst, in Munich.

2015 Works on the series *Las bum sik* (*Rass bum sic*), which is shown in a specially designed pavilion at the Glynde-bourne Festival, East Sussex.
Obtains Austrian citizenship.
The exhibition *Inbetween: Baselitz—McCarthy* is presented at the George Economou Collection, in Athens, followed by *How it began …* at the State Russian Museum, in Saint Petersburg, with works from the collection of the Albertina, in Vienna.
Produces the extensive series of drawings *Besuch von Hokusai* (*Visit from Hokusai*) and the sculptures Bündel (Bundle) and *Zero Dom* (*Zero Dome*), as well as the series of paintings *Dystopisches Paar* (*Dystopian Couple*) and *Wir fahren aus* (*We're Off*).

2016 Continues working on the series of paintings *Abgang mit Marcel* (*Descending with Marcel*).
The exhibition Mit Richard unterwegs: *Druckgrafik 1996–2016* (On the go with Richard: Prints 1996–2016) is shown at Schloss Dachau, near Munich.
The Städel Museum, in Frankfurt am Main, and the Moderna Museet, in Stock- holm, show for the first time *Die Helden* (*The Heroes*), the 1965–66 series of paintings and drawings, to a larger extent. The exhibition then travels to Rome and Bilbao.
The exhibition *Eksperiment og fornyelse* (Experiment and renewal), is presented at the Museum Jorn, in Silkeborg, Denmark.

2017 The exhibition *Preview with Review* is presented at the Hungarian National Gallery, in Budapest.

2018 *Georg Baselitz,* an exhibition commemorating his eightieth birthday, is shown at the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, and at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC. Parallel to this, the Kunstmuseum Basel presents *Werke auf Papier* (*Works on Paper*).

Lives and works in Basel, in Salzburg, at Ammersee, and in Imperia.

"I've no idea how I could ever have become a painter in California" Georg Baselitz in Dialogue with Martin Schwander

MS: Looking back at your life's work, what are you particularly proud of?
GB: I have always seen artists as beacons. Each artist sends out his signals, that's to say, his pictures. If the beacons are far away, it's hard to understand the signals, because you don't know the language. So, a lot of artists adopt an international language. But I've always avoided that, because I always wanted to be someone who you could trace back to his roots.
MS: What is the basis of your faith in oil painting?
GB: It initially arose from the decision-making dilemma I faced—like all my fellow students: does easel painting still exist, is the camera all there is now? Video was not yet an option back then. Are there alternatives to easel painting, are these alternatives necessary? All basic questions concerned with materials. I witnessed [Joseph] Beuys, the Happenings, and so on. I made a decision: it's all fine and well, but I'm not part of that. I'm different. A piece of paper is still all I need to demonstrate an idea I want to realize. I voluntarily went into isolation. I've always said I'm an outsider, but avant-garde. The lack of anyone to talk to was crucial and important—and has remained so to this day.
MS: What distinguishes an artist's work from all other human activities and inventions?
GB: Making pictures is not about conversing with the outside world. It's something that happens in other parts of the brain and produces other results. You work on a piece of paper or on a canvas whimsically, concentratedly, highly intellectually, or like a madman. You produce something outrageous, which is then judged by the general public: acceptable, not acceptable, good, beautiful, ugly, whatever. As an artist, I'm not in a position to work in question-and-answer mode. If you say, today's a lovely day, I can say, today's a bad day. But I can't provide an answer in my paintings, unlike those artists who knowingly seek out a conversation context. There are hardly any artists left like [Lucian] Freud, [Frank] Auerbach, and [Francis] Bacon, who worked autobiographically. That is the actual difference between me and most other artists.
MS: Do you think about timelessness in your artistic work?
GB: I do think about it, because the Zeitgeist is disastrous. You have to avoid coming into contact with it in any way. I've managed not to, with a few exceptions. The Neue Wilde era was dire. People used to say I was the father of this or that artist.
MS: Is the possibility of failure something that bothers you when you're working?
GB: I am extremely fearful, because I've never felt secure. First, I think: you used to be better. I certainly used to be physically better. Not mentally, just physically. Insecurity and fear of failure are a daily problem. Although I've got a good memory and can still see in my mind's eye how I used to paint pictures in 1965, that's not enough for a new painting.
MS: Does art have a moral purpose?
GB: The only purpose that has anything to do with morals is the artist's attitude. The artist's relationship to himself has to be right. Lies are not permitted. You have to engage in unspoken self-criticism, and you mustn't give the others a chance. For instance, flirting or grandly voicing an opinion are immoral. I grew up as a Protestant. So, I can't allow myself any of that. It wasn't part of my upbringing. Art can't change the world. If the world does change, it's because of other reasons. High-minded moral objectives merely ensure that two or ten million people understand a poem by Gottfried Benn and are moved by it. It's the same for paintings and above all for music. I stand weeping at the sight of a landscape by Théodore Rousseau in the Metropolitan Museum. But I don't ask, what are its social aspirations? What's behind it? Did [Jacques-Louis] David, whom I admire so much, back the wrong revolution? That just leaves me completely cold. But I'm not left at all cold when I discover that others are going in entirely the wrong direction because they are suppressing fundamental issues. Germany is a difficult country, after all the misery we went through. This game of hide-and-seek, this denial of cause and effect is horrendous.
MS: As a self-confessed nonbeliever, what do you see as the basis of your convictions?
GB: That's a question I just can't answer. Since I unfortunately don't go to confession, I am burdened with all the mistakes I've made. Perhaps they will count against me. I won't be absolved of them. This conviction actually depends entirely on society's failures. There is a lot that I have consciously witnessed but have never reacted to in my work. I've never said: I'm for peace, or I'm for war. I've never waved banners. I think it's good for me not to do that. That's my excuse. I'd even call that moral.
MS: How do you start on a painting?
GB: I initially worked in every sense in a much more confused way, more nervous, more tentative—in terms of format, drawing, color. I made numerous attempts to achieve simple results, which, of course, never aspired to be simple. Right from the outset they were meant to be earth-shattering. Since the whole thing frequently misfired, you don't see the earth-shattering effect. As time passed, intense study and a more grounded approach to the materials moved things along, and the results became better. Above all, they were there more quickly. At the beginning, the work was arduous, interminable, it took months. There were very few paintings, which I often regret. I wonder why I didn't do more Rayski heads or heroes. I'm not a painter who won't paint a picture a second time.
MS: Are there lengthy pauses in your work, or are you in fact constantly engaged in some artistic activity?
GB: There was never a voluntary, lengthy pause. There would only be a pause if it were impossible to work for reasons of ill health or because of other catastrophes. I have always tried to work and to go on thinking. It was through thinking and dreaming that a lot of pictures came to me, which I subsequently realized.
MS: What do you take into consideration when you are deciding on the formats of your paintings?
GB: At first, I used to decide on the format depending on the importance of the situation. You can't make a name with small formats. I just laughed at [Paul] Klee when I saw the first Klee exhibition in Berlin with burlap and linen passe-partouts. Large formats also destroy the consensual relationship between sofa and bourgeoisie, because the painting can't get through the door.
MS: You've been painting on the floor for many years now. What made you decide to do that?
GB: After the collapse of the GDR, I was determined to paint portraits of my family in a light, pleasant, water-color style. Since I had to be quick, I decided to paint on the floor. At first, I thought that you shouldn't see the feet that you do, of course, see when you're wading about in paint. I put planks or boards down and teetered about on them. I deliberately cultivated that way of working on the floor. Later, I turned it into a philosophy, which states that my contact does not reach upward into the heavens. In Christian Europe that is the only contact. People are frightened of the downward contact—with Hell. My contact goes downward. I'm a north-

of-the-Alps man, not to say a Teuton. The Mediterranean peoples, including Jesus Christ, tried to colonize us and missionize us. They told us about angels in Heaven. I don't believe in that. So, when I'm painting on the floor, the contact downward—feeling for what is under it—is really important.

MS: Has that way of working changed your painting?

GB: I only ever change my way of painting on purpose. Recently, I've been painting very thickly again. A few years ago, I wouldn't have dreamt of doing that. I'd have said: you just can't do that. You have to paint in layers like a master bricklayer, slapping the mortar down onto the wall.

MS: Is there an upper edge and a lower edge when you're painting on the floor?

GB: Actually, there isn't. Upper edge and lower edge don't come into it, because the canvas is lying on the floor like a piece of paper on a table. There is just the initial decision: upside down on the wall or not?

MS: You've often talked of handicaps that you inflict on yourself when you're painting. What does that mean?

GB: Painting upside down, for instance, is a handicap. At first, I needed to prove I had the talent to do that. I painted pictures upside down, working with photographs. So as not to pain anyone, the first pictures were portraits of friends, landscapes, and still lifes. They were to be absolutely simple. And then there was also the fact that you didn't have to think about composition, style, or painting techniques any more. I decided to use very cheap synthetic resin paints, which was not that unusual back then. They're dispersion paints used by decorators to create particular hues.

MS: Why such haste when you're painting, for decades now?

GB: Friends are forever pointing out that I'm a nervous, hectic, chaotic type. I'd primarily put that down to character, not necessarily a bad character, if anything a good character. I'm very disciplined in my daily work and in my thinking. I've given up trying to be disciplined in anything else. If that upsets other people, they just have to deal with it.

MS: Are there paintings that you don't finish, or reject in retrospect?

GB: Actually, there aren't. I chuck pictures out and lose sight of some things. But what you are describing doesn't happen.

MS: Every painting is, like [Pablo] Picasso did, dated on the day it is finished.

GB: In the past, very rarely, I dated them when they were started. For me, dating them on the day they are finished is like writing an entry in a diary, with the date at the top. When I'm thinking back I need those anchors, so that things don't descend into chaos. I see my work as a substitute for a diary.

MS: Working in series is a feature of your painting. *P. D. Füsse* [*P. D. Feet,* 1960–63] and *Helden* [*Heroes,* 1965–66] are early examples of that. Why do you still prefer variations on a theme to a unique "masterpiece"?

GB: I don't have to apologize; for me, it's an idée fixe. Feet are an idée fixe. Certain outrages are an idée fixe. Heroes are an idée fixe. There are fixations on things that I can't let go of. I painted a whole series of feet yesterday. And there's a philosophical explanation for that: contact downward is more important than an antenna on the roof.

MS: How does the high level of consistency in your choice of motifs fit with the volatility in your choice of painterly means?

GB: For as long as religion determined art—for many centuries that was also the case north of the Alps—each epoch had its own style: Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and so on. The ethnological range makes the European range even richer. That discovery sparked my curiosity: why did [Vincent] van Gogh, for instance, as well as German artists in the nineteenth century make Japanese woodcuts like mad? Those modish trends seemed to me like a luxury inviting a playful response: today I'll paint impressionistically, today I'll paint in the oriental manner, today I'll paint thickly. That went on for a long time, although it was never important—superficial if anything. I even took it to the point that I painted lots of [Willem] de Kooning quotations, not out of dependence, but because it was fun. But then I downgraded that rich array of methods and subjects again.

MS: Is Picasso's versatility, or [Francis] Picabia's, a benchmark for you?

GB: In 1960, I visited Paris for the first time with Elke. We went to all the galleries. There were several hundred in those days. At the Galerie Fürstenberg there was a Picabia retrospective with fifty or sixty paintings. That was the first time I saw Picabia. I even got to the point—as an impoverished student—of asking the prices. Although they cost practically nothing, I wasn't in a position to make off with any of them. I was so bowled over by them. That cracked the Picasso nut. The riddle was answered, the mathematical inequation was solved. It was a form of salvation for me: the realization that there was a relatively light, light-hearted answer to the rigid, extremely constrained Picasso principle. That was especially interesting for me, dumb German. Ever since then, humor has found its way into my paintings, only, sadly, no one ever sees it—to this day.

MS: Did you consider *Die grosse Nacht im Eimer* [*The Big Night Down the Drain,* 1962–63] a humorous painting?

GB: No, no. That was deadly serious and deadly angry, downright aggressive.

MS: From the outset, the fictionalization of your biography was founded on a kind of palimpsest wall of memories. How was it that a twenty-three-year-old, more or less unknown artist came up with the idea of presenting himself to the public with the words: "I am crooked with memories, swollen and bloated. There are lists in my keeping of the destinies that no-one looks to"? ["First Pandemonic Manifesto," 1961, 1st version].

GB: Most people got over things by not looking at them or by denying them. It was about the terrible, rotten, unbearable time in Germany between 1933 and 1945. I had been engulfed in all that. Since I am a sensitive type—although I've always acted very aggressively—you can easily imagine what a terrible effect the GDR era also had on me. If you're as cerebral and memory-dependent as me, you really never forget anything.

MS: In West Germany in the 1960s, no other artists were addressing the effects of the Nazi era on the psyche and morals of the survivors and making that the theme of their art as radically and confrontationally as you did. What made you take such a provocative stance back then?

GB: That's what I did, and I'm still not doing anything different today. I've never found anyone in Germany who sees the problem the way I do. In my case, it was consciously and unconsciously different. The conscious element was the painting, and the unconscious element was the source of the painting—the memory. I've never gotten away from those memories. It's disagreeable ballast, but it's also interesting. I was the madman in the cage, and, standing in the middle of my own mess, I thought about it all. I've no

idea how I could ever have become a painter in California, although I know how great painting is over there.

MS: Another leitmotif in your work is the, one might say, obsessive invocation of your native Saxony.

GB: Even in West Berlin, I was an émigré. Family, friends, school, the countryside—everything was gone. I got my parents to send me a few things that mattered to me, such as the journals published by the Sächsischer Heimatschutz [a regional society for the conservation of the landscape and cultural history of Saxony], with black-and-white photographs of antlers, birds, mountain formations, hikes, and so on. At first, it was an intense longing and intense dependence on what was there and no longer there. Later it became a fixation. I used to ask myself: what more do you need? Italy is beautiful, but do you really want to put that in your paintings? In the 1970s I had a photo of three Italian apple trees that I wanted to use for a painting. But it didn't work because the apple trees I'd gotten to know were structured differently. So then, I took out my Sächsischer Heimatschutz journals and got my brother-in-law, an amateur photographer, to send me some black-and-white photographs. You become so dependent, you shut yourself away in your own hermetic existence. I quickly found examples of others who had done the same thing. My instructor had suggested I read Marcel Proust. After that I read Samuel Beckett. They were proof that I was on the right road.

MS: What prompted you, at the age of twenty-three, to take the name of the village where you were born?

GB: I basically had two reasons for doing that: first, I hated the name Kern. That name expressed such huge dominance, which had a negative impact on me. The father-son relationship was very bad, full of aggression on my side. Part of the reason was that my father was in the Party. Later on, I took it all back and apologized. And then we had a wonderful relationship, but in those rough times it was really bad. On the other hand, I didn't want to leave my parents out in the cold. It wasn't easy if the child of a family employed by the state fled. I also took a different name because I already had the feeling that my first public appearance would not go unnoticed. The art scene was short of scandals back then.

MS: So, you were planning a scandal?

GB: Yes, of course, a scandal, only not of those proportions. I had already given *Die grosse Nacht im Eimer* a test run at home. My instructor, who was visiting, saw the painting and said, "For goodness sake, what an anachronism, you can't do that." In the end, I did exhibit the painting, although at the time—I was still a student—I shouldn't have exhibited anything without permission from the academy. The aggressive position I adopted was the result of the way I was treated. The rejection I met with, as a person, was extreme. I intentionally looked different, I dressed conspicuously. Art students were exceptions to the rule and had a certain pride. We would never have sat with the architecture students.

MS: Didn't that sense of being "crooked with memories" become a burden over the years?

GB: Not at all, it became more and more of a rich resource. I have the feeling that my head has swollen a bit since those days. It's as though I'm a hydrocephalus, because I can't just accept anything. I question everything, even what I'm given to eat and drink. This huge skepticism toward the world around me—I'm constantly scenting treachery and betrayal—is not a good characteristic. But ultimately, bad memories turn into pleasant memories. The memories of the rotten Nazi era even have some playful aspects. I played with munitions, I played with soldiers, I ate at the field kitchen. School didn't happen. The school where we lived was requisitioned by soldiers who had their radio communications in the basement. There were people fleeing and there was shelling, mother and siblings screaming, and most of all the countless refugees who thought the end of the world was coming. It was absolute chaos, an apocalyptic world, you had to watch where you put your feet. There were no roads any more when we made our way through Dresden. I can live with all that now and know that, in it, I have something quite distinct, almost a form of capital. My question is simply: why do others only ever use it as a form of distanced critique? As a German, you are responsible, regardless of whether or not your father or grandfather was a Nazi. I wasn't, but I would instantly have become one if I'd been old enough to have had the chance. In those days, everyone was gripped by it.

MS: Weren't you afraid that those early paintings would see you go down in art history as a German out-sider?

GB: In those days, I didn't see art history laid out before me. These days, it seems great to me, the way I'm integrated into art history. In my mind, that's actually the most positive thing about my whole life. The happiest thing is that I've been accepted into the circle of artists and intellectuals along with all the others I once rejected so vehemently, like Freud and Bacon. Actually, I rejected everything. I only accepted Picabia and some other curious figures. Now we're all there together in the auction catalogues and in the history books, too.

MS: In 1969 you turned the motifs in your paintings upside down; can that also be read as a way of neutralizing the subject matter?

GB: After the *Fraktur* [*Fracture*] paintings, in which I poked fun at Cubism, I realized that everything I was doing was somehow impossible. I couldn't sell anything. Who could like that dreadful stuff? And on top of that, I'd deliberately adopted a bourgeois lifestyle. I stopped the heavy drinking, later I stopped smoking, too. I dressed respectably and behaved respectably. And then I started wondering about the next provocative step I could take in my little world. After I'd seen the Kraushar Collection in Darmstadt—[Karl] Ströher's Pop Art collection—I said to myself: [Andy] Warhol, [James] Rosenquist, [Roy] Lichtenstein, they're all decent blokes who make great pictures. Couldn't you just take a more objective, intellectual approach to it all? I knew that could only be a shock. How could I extract something from my junk and turn it into something good? You've got a biography as an artist; that's over now. You're making a new start. I made a daring move, partly in the knowledge that whatever I did, I had nothing to lose. I immediately exhibited the new paintings at the art fair in Cologne. Franz Dahlem, who had shown me the Pop Art in Darmstadt, had rented rooms in a gallery building. He hung my paintings in rooms that weren't finished yet. There wasn't any scandal. People just thought it was crazy. The shock only came later.

MS: Was the decision to upend the motif not also a response to that time—Conceptual Art's hostility toward pictures and the stigmatization of painting as a reactionary, bourgeois legacy?

GB: Up to that point, I had no concept, up to then I'd worked autobiographically with confused things from the past. Everyone else had a concept: the mono-chrome concept, the Minimalist concept, and so on. I, too, wanted to have something to say with a concept. I said to myself: under cover of a concept you're going to stop being the bad boy that you are. Drop the gestural—the aggression and savagery—which is so important to you when you're working. Forget

it all, discipline yourself, paint slowly, use a photograph, that's a huge constraint. But the bad boy came back pretty quickly. I can't hide myself, I can't pretend to. All those subjects are still there.

MS: The upside-down motif also opened a new discourse. For the first time, there was talk of the painting as an autonomous object. Looking back, was it not naïve to imagine that there are paintings that resist interpretation and associations?

GB: It is an absolutely naïve idea. Only, I was still able to do anything I wanted, in complete freedom. I wasn't beholden to anyone. My three, four admirers swal-lowed that pill; the rest refused it.

MS: In 1969, for the first time, you painted pictures after photographs you had taken and after reproductions in newspapers and books. Did working with photographic source imagery also owe something to the conceptualization of painting?

GB: Everyone was painting pictures after photographs. But I was already putting things into reverse. Unlike all the others, I didn't paint the world of consumerism. I painted my own silly things, my friends, my wood-lands. The new paintings were just as comical and just as impossible as the old ones. The only difference was that they had more to do with reality, because of the photographs. They were legible now. The earlier paintings—the heroes, the dogs—were somehow all incomprehensible.

MS: How would you characterize the relationship between painting and photography in your work?

GB: I took photographs of things that interested me. However, I had to admit that the photographs didn't live up to what I wanted, nor to what I had seen. Photographs are memories of objects, landscapes, or people. That's the only thing about photographs that interests me. Other than that, I have no relationship to photography.

MS: Yet you've used photographic imagery since 1969.

GB: You could see it like that. It was a stylistic break, when objects first cropped up that were recognizable as such. Before that, they were ghosts, like *Die Peitschenfrau* [*The Whip Woman,* 1964–65], for instance.

MS: You deliberately chose simple motifs.

GB: 1968 to 1969 were the saddest years in my life. I had caused a commotion, but I wasn't successful. We'd moved from Berlin to the provinces—to live like hermits—as a protest of sorts. Out there, I didn't even have the small successes I had had in Berlin. There was nothing at all. They were all exasperated with me. I had to change something. I urgently needed distance from what I had painted up until then. There was still something in my pants, but it wasn't on view anymore.

MS: In the first half of the 1980s, people started to make a connection between your paintings and the Neo-Expressionist paintings that had started to appear in Europe and the United States. Why did you resist being feted as one of the fathers of Neo-Expressionism?

GB: The main reason was that I didn't feel it had any outstanding qualities. It was an academic route that ended in complete failure. Those painters were trying to take an art-historical leap into the past; they wanted to reinstate—faster, bigger, and updated—what had been lost in Germany after 1933. I just said to myself: you can't behave like [Ernst Ludwig] Kirchner or [Emil] Nolde and paint the way they did. They didn't care. They played their own game with what had gone before, and had a lot of fun along the way.

MS: You didn't want to have anything to do with that game?

GB: My response was the *Remix* paintings. I said: if that's what you're up to, I'll paint even sillier things; I'll paint my heroes again and call them "remixes". I'll put my figures in a passe-partout, I'll make everything much bigger, and I'll do it in an hour.

MS: But the *Remix* paintings came much later, at a time when Neo-Expressionist painting had long since been forgotten.

GB: It was a late reaction, but it was a reaction.

MS: Notwithstanding, in your paintings from the early 1980s there are numerous references to works by Edvard Munch and the Brücke painters. How would you define your relationship to the Expressionist tradition in art?

GB: I didn't understand my own relationship to Expressionism for a long time. The earliest drawings in my catalogue raisonné were done in 1958–59 after Munch reproductions. I didn't say so at the time, but you can see it. My father, who was a school teacher, had a small library, where there were also art postcards and art calendars. I never saw any Klee, Kirchner, or Bauhaus books there. They had all already been cleared out, if there ever had been any. But I am fairly sure my father had Munch paintings in a calendar or in some other form.

MS: Unlike his compatriot Knut Hamsun, the writer and Nobel prizewinner, Munch never offered his services to the Nazis.

GB: The Nazis came knocking at his door several times. Munch just didn't open it. Knut Hamsun—his novel *Hunger* [1890]—was my literary bedrock in those days, along with [Fyodor] Dostoyevsky, who is also pretty depressing. It was all very hard going.

MS: How did you first become aware of the Brücke artists?

GB: When I was a professor in Karlsruhe I went to the Kunsthalle and, for the first time, looked at paintings by Kirchner and Nolde properly. I stood there gazing at them and said to myself: pretty crazy, what they were doing. Nolde—the way he distorts people—and Kirchner with his madness. But that has nothing to do with you, you're working after photographs at the moment, you don't accept distortion as a design tool. I admired Picasso as a picture smasher, but didn't at all admire Bacon as a distortion-artist. When I'd seen the paintings by Kirchner and Nolde, I said to myself: wonderful, they're so German.

MS: How would you define Germanness in art?

GB: I've thought about that a lot: why don't I like [Albrecht] Dürer? Why don't I like the Nazarenes? For a long time, Caspar David Friedrich was a huge problem for me. Why did I prefer [Eugène] Delacroix, [Théodore] Géricault, and [Joseph Mallord William] Turner? I've repeatedly said: German is ugly. Why are my paintings ugly? Because I'm German my paintings are ugly, regardless of what I do. Even if I painted accurately, like [Anselm] Feuerbach.

MS: Is Munch a German artist in your view?

GB: Munch is a German in my view. His history, his fame, his influence: the interaction between Munch—Nordic painting as a whole—and Germany was so intense.

MS: Am I right in thinking that Munch is more important to you than the Brücke artists?

GB: Much more important. It's the everydayness of Munch that fascinates me, the sadness, the strange snow, the oddly clunky realism—so fleeting, so fragmented. The older he got, the better his paintings became.

MS: But your paintings *Der Brückechor* [*The Brücke Chorus,* 1983] and *Nachtessen in Dresden* [*Supper in Dresden,* 1983] are homages to the Brücke artists.

GB: That was something I had to do, like the Caspar David Friedrich paintings [1998] for the Reichstag. As a German, you have to show that you are a German. I don't shout "Sieg Heil," but I did paint the *Brückechor*.

MS: That sounds rather ambiguous.
GB: Completely ambiguous. The same way that Frida Kahlo, for instance, inspired a swastika, when I discovered that her father was from Baden-Baden. Kahlo, who was in love with Leon Trotsky and painted Joseph Stalin when he had Trotsky put to death. Things like that worry me. You wouldn't believe how much.
MS: Is ornament—an important factor in your art—also part of the German art tradition?
GB: In my mind, ornament is always both a defense and an excuse. The formal game of hide-and-seek is always very important as an excuse. I say to myself: people need pictures, they have to be lured into a new way of seeing by a kind of Ariadne's thread, they have to find a way into the painting. Ornament is the way in.
MS: For you, art comes from art.
GB: Absolutely, not from anything else. It was a difficult, thorny path with a lot of detours. When I started painting as an adolescent, all I had to hand were postage stamps with spiritual heroes like [Adolf] Hitler, [Richard] Wagner, Stalin, and so on. I said to myself: if you paint a picture, it must not be a superfluous picture. You can't paint a landscape, you have to paint something of global importance, something heroic, filled with pathos. In my mind, a weighty subject and an important painting were one and the same. Later, I realized that the opposite is the case: the paintings are the heroes. At some point, I discovered that I had painted important pictures, which also became source images.
MS: You're alluding to the *Remix* paintings?
GB: Yes, although even before the *Remix* paintings there were already a lot of quotes from earlier works in my paintings. The hermetic nature of my work was already important early on.
MS: In your work today are there art-historical sources and/or paintings of your own that are of particular importance to you?
GB: Last year, without exception, I only worked on pictures that I had already painted before. It wasn't so much the interpretation that interested me, but more the changed methods. The methods I've used are, for example, the de Kooning method, the Auerbach method, the oriental method; not the Pointillism method yet, that might happen tomorrow.
MS: Would you describe the paintings you are doing now as late works?
GB: I'm in my later life, and there are works, so I suppose they must be. Only one associates such terrible things with late works—usually disintegration.
MS: There are also examples of the opposite. Picasso's late works are staggeringly full of life.
GB: I view Picasso's late works with considerable skepticism. There's a lot of pretense there, a lot just has a wash of young ferocity.
MS: Are there no late works that have your blessing?
GB: They all have my blessing—successes and failures alike. Late works are actually already enough of a failure, of a decline.
MS: But there are also examples of sublime, highly spiritual late works.
GB: There are. I've seen late paintings by Rothko, where he just used the paint straight from a tube or a bucket, no more than that. It's the Rothko system, but it's not the Rothko method. Those paintings are late works, wonderful old-age nonsense.
MS: Could you ever imagine not painting anymore?
GB: Whenever I'm in a depression—I'm often depressed—Elke keeps saying I should call it a day. Of course, that's impossible. It would be coquetry. What do I think about when I'm lying in the hospital, as I have been a few times recently? Not about calling it quits, but about what the new paintings will look like, what the next move might be. The biological will to survive, which you cannot influence, also applies to one's work and one's spirit.
MS: Your new paintings are meditations on mortality.
GB: I must say, I've enjoyed portraying my age and my wife's age. Sometimes with humor, mostly without. I'm astonished that I can even do it, because in the past I've always resisted even any hint of that. When I used to paint my wife, I never wanted to show that I love my wife. I had an insight: it's to do with my hermetic existence, being shut away in my own world, that I now want to see this situation in my paintings. There's also a new pictorial technique: letting things disappear in the mist. Whatever the case, the most important thing is: how do I make my way to new paintings, how can I not just sustain but perhaps even improve myself. I think it's still possible.

This conversation took place at Ammersee, Bavaria, on August 22, 2017.

Baselitz

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/ A grand retrospective of works by an artist who rejuvenated our habits of perception

After celebrating its twentieth anniversary with three blockbuster exhibitions in 2017, the Fondation Beyeler is starting the year 2018 with Georg Baselitz—without a doubt one of the most influential painters and sculptors of our time—who is celebrating his eightieth birthday, and the Foundation is devoting an extensive retrospective to this provocateur. Many of Baselitz's most important paintings and sculptures from the past six decades will be seen together for the first time. By displaying key works together, on an equal footing, it becomes easier to perceive the unique wealth of his formal and contextual innovations. Leafing through more than two hundred richly illustrated pages, the reader encounters the beautiful, the ugly, the ambiguous, and the disturbing.

Exhibitions:
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel 21.1.–29.4.2018
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. 21.6.–16.9.2018

HATJE CANTZ

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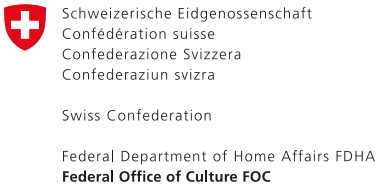

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