

[Baselitz at Gagolian Gallery](#)

[Baselitz at Thaddaeus Ropac](#)

[Baselitz at the Tate](#)



Baselitz, 2010

Photograph: J. Haufe

Baselitz's first solo exhibition in West Berlin sparked a public scandal. His paintings *The Big Night Down the Drain* (*Die große Nacht im Eimer*) and *The Naked Man* were seen as lewd and obscene. A [2015 interview](#) "The Antisocial Socialist" discusses this moment in his career and life.

The [Guggenheim](#) hosted Baselitz's first major retrospective in the United States in 1995. [Read an article](#) from Art in America's archive about the exhibition. The artist's first exhibition in the United Kingdom was at the [Royal Academy of Arts](#) in 2007, followed by the exhibition *Mrs Lenin and the Nightingale* at London's [White Cube Gallery](#) in 2009.

Baselitz first made [controversial statements](#) about women artists in a 2013 interview published in Der Spiegel. Backlash immediately appeared, including Hyperallergic's [article](#) "Georg Baselitz Is a Sexist Grump." The artist [repeated his opinion](#) in a 2015 interview with the Guardian, saying: "If women are ambitious enough to succeed, they can do so, thank you very much. But up until now, they have failed to prove that they want to. Normally, women sell themselves well, but not as painters." The art world continues to grapple with the artist's outspoken opinions. Arielle Bier's [2016 article](#) asks the question: "Should Georg Baselitz's Misogyny Affect Our Appreciation of His Work?"

Baselitz has always been outspoken. In a [2014 interview](#), the artist asked: "Am I supposed to be friendly?" In 2015, he [removed his works](#) from German museums in protest of a planned cultural heritage protection law.

A 2018 retrospective was launched by the [Fondation Beyeler](#) and the [Hirshhorn Museum](#) on the occasion of the artist's 80th birthday. The exhibition included 100 works covering six decades of production. Read an [Artnet article](#) about the collaborative endeavor.

Read a [Smithsonian Magazine](#) article, "The Topsy-Turvy Worldview of Georg Baselitz" about his upside-down portrait paintings.

The 2019 exhibition [Devotion](#) at Gagolian featured works inspired by self-portraits by other artists Baselitz admires. Read an interview about the exhibition in [Gagosian Quarterly](#) and watch a [video interview](#) with the artist about his idol, Edvard Munch.

[Read a conversation](#) between the artist and Kosme de Barañano about a major retrospective at the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice.

[Georg Baselitz: I Was Born Into a Destroyed Order](#) opened at Michael Werner Gallery in 2020. In 2021, the artist also opened [Georg Baselitz: Pivotal Turn](#) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and [Baselitz: The Retrospective](#) at Centre Pompidou.

Read a [recent interview](#) with Baselitz about the art world living in a "quota-ocracy" and "what it really takes to be a great artist."



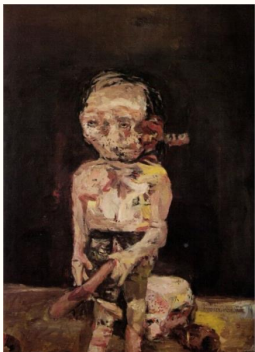
Baselitz, 1971

Photograph: Lothar Wolleh

Georg Baselitz (German, b. 1938)
Grosse Nacht (Big Night), 1962-1963
 Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2023:79.1

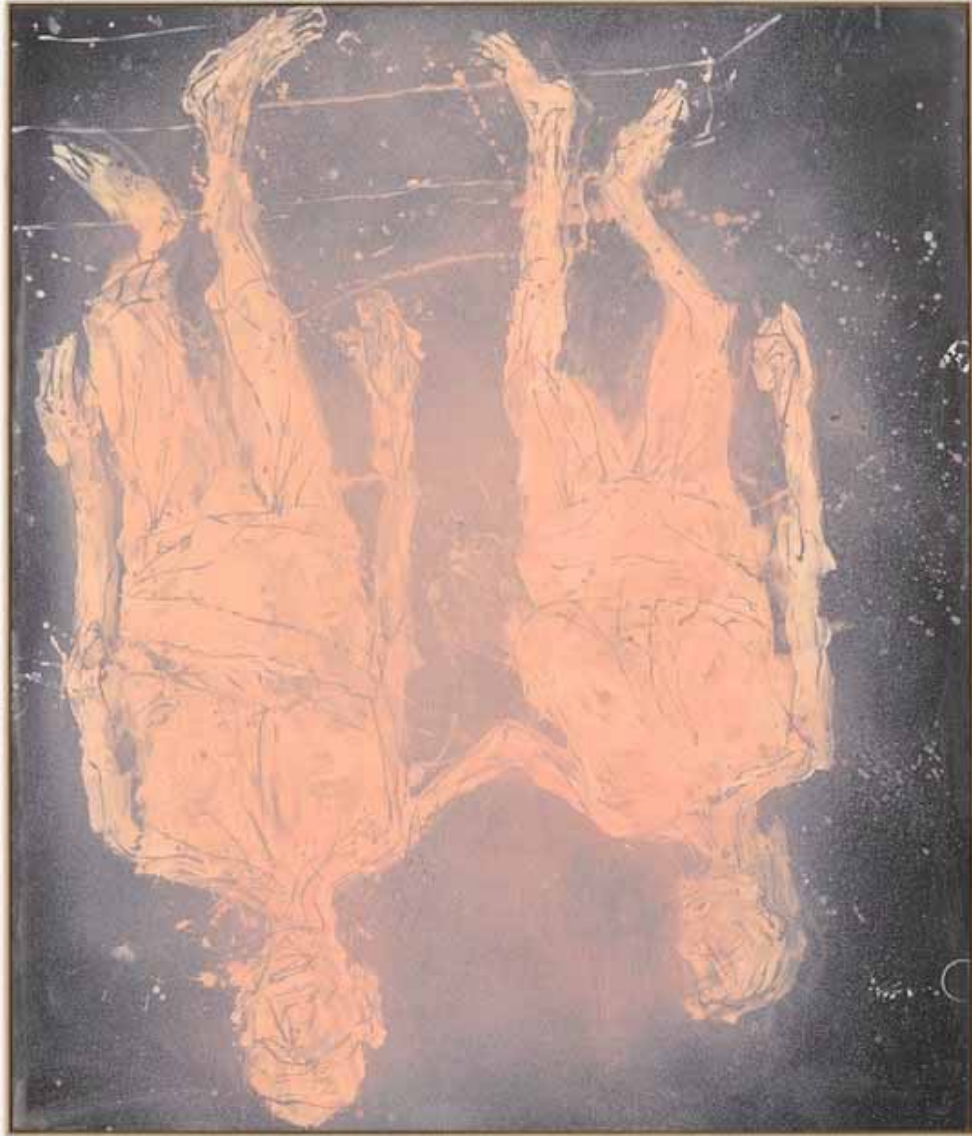
Born in East Germany in the tumultuous postwar years, Georg Baselitz was instrumental in redefining German art in the second half of the twentieth century. In the early 1960s, his distorted, fleshy, explicit male figures sparked an obscenity scandal at his first solo exhibition in West Berlin. **Grosse Nacht (Big Night)** is part of this early series, which often featured his disfigured male subjects trapped in dark rooms. The painting serves as a counterpoint to the infamous *Die große Nacht im Eimer (The Big Night Down the Drain)*, depicting the figure again in a less confident, flaccid pose. Baselitz considered this series to be “the biological beginning” of his approach to the human form. According to the artist: “I started out radically... it was fun to do something extraordinary and serious and I felt very privileged to have the artist’s power to contradict.”



Die große Nacht im Eimer (The Big Night Down the Drain)
 1962-1963
 Oil on canvas



On view August 23 – November 26, 2023



Georg Baselitz (German, b. 1938)

Mitten im Rosa, 2018

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:124.3

George Baselitz began painting his subjects upside down in 1969 to slow down both the artistic process and the viewer's understanding of the image. The unexpected orientation of the canvas makes figurative paintings appear abstract; it requires close looking and a reconsideration of perspective to fully grasp the inverted image. **Mitten im Rosa** ("Amidst the Pink") is a recent example of this style, featuring two aged and frail bodies walking together along a dark path. The artist once said: "I begin with an idea, but as I work the picture takes over. Then there is the struggle between the idea I preconceived... and the picture that fights for its own life."

On view September 14 – December 18, 2022

Georg Baselitz (German, b. 1938)

Big Night (Remix), 2008

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2022:15.1

Painter and sculptor Georg Baselitz began his formal artistic training at the University of Fine and Applied Arts in East Berlin, from which he was expelled in 1957 for “sociopolitical immaturity” and nonconformity to Socialist Realism. The artist then moved to West Berlin, where his first solo exhibition sparked immediate scandal over the obscene nature of *Die große Nacht im Eimer (The Big Night Down the Drain)*. The painting was removed from the exhibition by police on its opening night and only returned to the artist after a prolonged trial. **Big Night (Remix)** is part of the artist’s *Remix* series (2005-2008), which revisited the provocative artwork 45 years after its initial censorship. According to Baselitz: “This idea of ‘looking toward the future’ is nonsense. I realized that simply going backwards is better. You stand in the rear of the train – looking at the tracks flying back below – or you stand at the stern of a boat and look back – looking back at what’s gone.”



Die große Nacht im Eimer (The Big Night Down the Drain)

1962-1963

Oil on canvas



On view September 14 – December 18, 2022



Georg Baselitz (German, b. 1938)

Sonntag war es schön, 2021

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:123.1

After growing up during the tumultuous era of the Second World War and postwar East Germany as Hans-Georg Kern, Georg Baselitz adopted his name in 1961 as a tribute to his hometown. In his practice, Baselitz is known for scenes and portraits painted upside-down. **Sonntag war es schön** is an abstracted portrait of his wife, Elke. The inverted composition challenges perception: Elke's colorful figure sitting on a simple black chair is difficult to read figuratively as painted, and may appear as abstract unless carefully observed. Baselitz intentionally works to disrupt principles of harmony, once saying: "I was born into a destroyed order, a destroyed landscape, a destroyed people, a destroyed society. And I didn't want to reestablish order: I had seen enough of so-called order. I was forced to question everything, to be 'naïve,' to start again." The outspoken painter's six-decade career has been shadowed by periodic controversy—often of his own making—as exemplified by Baselitz's recent disparaging remarks about women painters.

On view December 22, 2021 – March 27, 2022