
Cristea Roberts Gallery

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Press Release

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Georg Baselitz: Geschichte

23 January – 28 February 2026



Georg Baselitz; *Geschichte*, 2024

On the occasion of Georg Baselitz's 88th birthday, Cristea Roberts Gallery is pleased to introduce *Geschichte*, the artist's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery, which presents a new body of work that focuses on one of Baselitz's most enduring and provocative motifs – the eagle or Adler.

This exhibition brings together over twenty etchings and aquatints that depict the inverted eagle alongside other animals, such as the hare and the deer, as well as the artist's most recurrent muse, his wife Elke.

The title of the exhibition, *Geschichte*, comes from the German word for history or tale. With this dual meaning in mind, Baselitz establishes a dialogue between two of his most famous motifs: the eagle and Elke, bringing them together in a new narrative (or *Geschichte*), whilst acknowledging the historical importance of both themes in his oeuvre.

Baselitz's graphic work often interrogates both personal and political histories and is constantly engaged in a disruptive process of orienting and disorienting, challenging what defines traditional, symbolic or subversive picture-making.

Baselitz first came to printmaking in 1964, with eagles becoming a steadfast feature of his graphic oeuvre from 1970 onward. Baselitz was drawn to printmaking due to the medium's demand for precision; he noticed that where definitive lines were often absent in painting, in printmaking, there was the need for complete clarity and explicit mark-making to accurately transmute ideas to the matrix. The subject of the Adler was important to Baselitz for this very reason – the eagle being the ultimate symbol that bore the brunt of his German identity.

The eagle, the national and imperial emblem of Germany, became a provocative image when it was co-opted by the Third Reich in 1933. Baselitz has never shied away from controversy in his practice, rather he resists censorship and erasure, offering his own version of history and the reality of being a German artist. He is well-known for his admission: "*What I could never escape was Germany, and being German.*" For Baselitz, the Adler is an autobiographical series, a realisation of the self, informed by signs of the visible world.

Baselitz's eagles defy expectations. In *Später wurden Halbschuhe gefunden*, 2024, the clawed feet of an eagle grip a branch; in *Hütte Bank Ausblick*, 2024, an eagle drops through the air. It does not raise its wings, its feathers implied through Baselitz's distinctive marks. As is the way with all of Baselitz's subjects, the eagles are inverted, as a reminder of surface and the illusory nature of figuration.

In *Geschichte*, 2024, Baselitz illustrates the seated figure of Elke opposing a large eagle, bringing two of his oldest motifs into the same frame. In another print, *Verliebtheit damals und heute*, 2024, the artist tenderly transcribes his personal history and that of Elke seated across from one another in conversation. These new works are steeped in art historical references.

Although Baselitz evokes the iconography of the Old Masters: the lovers; the seated nude; Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the many animalistic disguises of Jupiter; the artist's overarching interest in the artificial echoes the Mannerists of the sixteenth century, who reacted against the harmonious compositions of the High Renaissance to paint asymmetrical, exaggerated subjects with elongated and distorted forms.

In the sugar-lift aquatints *Kein Reh*, *Kein Hirsch*, and *Kein Adler*, 2022, Baselitz portrays Elke, pictured beneath the gestural marks of an inferred blanket. Skeletal and intimate, the pale yellow marks of the blanket disrupt the rest of the configuration. The artist has often described how Elke plays a role in the editioning of his large-scale prints with the artist describing her as his "left-hand." Elke is both muse and collaborator, subject and participant.

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In *Hirschtuch*, and *Hasentuch*, 2022, Baselitz employs the same motif, this time a hare and the head of a deer are shown beneath the blanket. The artist supplants Elke for another extension of himself, the hare and deer being classical representations of hunting animals and game, important characters in German symbolism.

When the artist was a teenager, a relative showed him pastoral hunting scenes by Ferdinand von Rayski, of deer, hare, rabbits and hunting dogs. These naturalistic paintings, which had a rich tradition in Germany in their own right, became important for Baselitz as the animals represented both loss and reclamation, the mythology of Germany from earlier centuries, as well as providing a connection to the landscape that was physically lost to him due to his move to West Berlin and the establishment of the Berlin Wall which remained standing from 1961 to 1989.

Baselitz reclaims these provocative pictures and examines their power, rooting them in his own mythology and the canon of art history - the artist's own *Geschichte*.

About the artist

Georg Baselitz was born Hans-Georg Kern in 1938 in Saxony, an area that later became part of East Germany. In 1956, whilst studying painting at the Academy of Art in East Berlin, he was expelled for 'political immaturity' for not having conformed to DDR standards in art. He then enrolled at the Academy in West Berlin completing his studies in 1962. During this period he adopted the surname Baselitz, reflecting his birth place, Deutschbaselitz. His first solo exhibition took place in 1963 in Berlin amid controversy when several of his paintings were confiscated by the German authorities on the grounds of public indecency.

A prolific printmaker, Baselitz engages with various technical processes, working extensively in woodcut, linocut and etching. He describes the resistant qualities of copper plates, wood blocks and linoleum blocks as creative forces in his art and has referred to prints as having "*symbolic power which has nothing to do with a painting*". Baselitz established his international reputation with exhibitions at the Venice Biennale 1980 and Documenta 1983. In 2021 Baselitz was elected a foreign associate member of the prestigious Académie des beaux-arts, one of five institutions comprising the Institut de France.

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2023 included a major retrospective featuring five decades of the artist's work exhibited together with forty Old Masters at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

Solo exhibitions and retrospectives include Kode Art Museum, Bergen; Munch Museum, Oslo; Sakip Sabancı Museum, Istanbul (2025); Galleria degli Antichi, Sabbioneta (2024); Serpentine, London; Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München, Pinakothek (2023); Museo di Palazzo Grimani, Venice; The Emilio and Anna-bianca Vedova Foundation, Venice (2021); Kunstmuseum, Basel (2018); Beyeler Foundation, Basel which travelled to Hirschhorn Museum, Washington D.C. (2018); CAFA Art Museum, Beijing; Fire Station, Doha (2017); Tate Modern London (2015); Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (2009); Royal Academy of Arts, London (2007); Louisiana Museum, Copenhagen (2006); Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (1996); Guggenheim Museum, New York (1995); Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (1990) and Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (1983).

Other exhibitions include Hall Art Foundation, Reading; Marta Herford Museum for Art, Architecture, Design, Herford; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris (2025); The Morgan Library & Museum, New York; Museum Würth 2, Künzelsau; Kunstmuseum Schloss Derneburg; Albertina Museum, Vienna; Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest; Albertinum, Staatliche; Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München; and The Serpentine, London. His paintings, sculptures and prints are in the collections of major museums around the world.

Georg Baselitz lives and works in Basel, Switzerland; Lake Ammersee, Germany; and Imperia, Italy.

Visitor information

Tues - Fri 11am - 5.30pm

Sat 11am - 2pm

Closed on Mondays, Sundays and public holidays

Free admission

Travel: Piccadilly or Green Park underground station
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