

Georg Baselitz

Devotion

16 May - 22 June 2019

Private View Wednesday 15 May 6 - 7.30 pm



Georg Baselitz; Auerbach (yellow); Andy Warhol; Rousseau; Eisenman, 2018

"I do not do anything without context. I always have sources. I always use information from the past." Georg Baselitz

Devotion is the first major exhibition of prints by German artist Georg Baselitz (b. 1938) to be presented in the UK in over 25 years. The exhibition, on display from 16 May to 22 June 2019, features 32 etchings based on self-portraits of artists that Baselitz admires or is influenced by, including Frank Auerbach, Cecily Brown, Tracey Emin, Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Joan Mitchell, Robert Rauschenberg, Mark Rothko and Andy Warhol, amongst others. This selection of both Baselitz's predecessors and peers offer us an insight into the mind of the artist; each self-portrait has been carefully selected and reimagined in Baselitz's own unique style.

Devotion forms part of a wider project which includes paintings and drawings, all on the same subject, inspired by time Baselitz spent at the Kunstmuseum, Basel, preparing for an exhibition in 2018. Here he viewed a full-length portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire with his muse, painted by Henri Rousseau (*The Poet and his Muse. Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire and Marie Laurencin*, 1909). Baselitz observed that even a portrait made of another person, is always a self-portrait of the artist; *"I have painted a lot of portraits of myself and my wife in recent years, many dressed as others – sometimes as my parents, sometimes as Lenin and Stalin but mostly as Otto Dix's parents ... Last year I bought a lot of old Italian frames and painted portraits to go into them. In the end I didn't put the portraits into the old frames, but Rousseau's double portrait in Basel in its old painted frame still haunted me. My mind was a jumble of portraits, frames and Rousseau, our anti-realist painter."*

Many of the self-portraits Baselitz has appropriated derive from periods in the artists' lives before they achieved their mature, distinctive styles. *Andy Warhol*, 2018, is based on a simple line drawing made by Warhol in 1942 when he was only 14 years old. *Joan Mitchell*, 2018, is sourced from a self-portrait, in pencil, made when Mitchell was 25 years old, and *Rothko I and II*, 2018, derives from a figurative representation Mark Rothko painted when he was 33 years old. Baselitz's reimagining means the subject of each work is neither the sitter nor the original self-portrait, but the very act of mark-making itself.

These new etchings, in several colour variants, are made with a combination of aquatint and line engraving. Baselitz, who is a prolific printmaker, works from his own printing press in his studio outside Munich. Alan Cristea comments, *"For Baselitz, printmaking is as important a part of his artistic practice as painting, drawing and sculpture. Having made his first print in 1964, he has now established an annual rhythm of spending the time between October and December working on a new print project. He works directly onto the copper plates, using his own press to pull and rework proofs until he is satisfied, at which point he works with a Master printer who pulls the final editions. Printmaking comes as naturally to Baselitz as painting and drawing and over the over the past fifty-five years he has made use of numerous different techniques including woodcut, linocut and etching."*

Devotion is Georg Baselitz's first exhibition at Alan Cristea Gallery, London. To coincide with the Biennale di Venezia a major survey of Baselitz's work, curated by Kosme de Barañano, will open at the Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, from 8 May – 8 September 2019. This is the first exhibition by a living artist in the museum.

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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.

In the mid-1960s Baselitz embarked on a series of paintings depicting monumental male figures which he described as Rebels, Shepherds or A New Type ('Ein neuer Typ'). Viewed within the Romantic tradition, the rebel is often regarded as an outsider associated with the figure of the artist. These paintings are referred to as the 'Hero' ('Helden') series and were influenced by Italian Mannerist prints which Baselitz saw on a scholarship to Florence in 1965. Four years later, Baselitz introduced what became the signature motif for the next 50 years, depicting all his imagery upside down. During the 1980s and early 1990s, his work became denser and more heavily worked.

Baselitz established his international reputation with exhibitions at the Venice Biennale 1980 and Documenta 1983. Solo exhibitions and retrospectives include 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). 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.

Press Release April 2019

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About Alan Cristea Gallery

The Alan Cristea Gallery, established in 1995, is one of the world's largest publishers of original contemporary prints and editions, and the primary representative for a number of renowned contemporary artists, artists' estates and emerging artists.

The gallery's ethos is artist-led and its principle objective is to assist artists in bringing new bodies of work to fruition, including editions, works on paper, paintings, sculpture and installations, which are presented in a continuous programme of public exhibitions, events and art fairs.

Visitor information:

Mon - Fri 10am - 5.30pm

Sat 11am - 2pm

Closed on Sundays and public holidays

Travel: Piccadilly or Green Park underground station

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