

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

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GAGOSIAN GALLERY
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Tue – Sat 10:00am–6:00pm

GEORG BASELITZ: *The Turning Point: Paintings 1969 – 71*

GEORG BASELITZ: *Recent Sculptures*

Tuesday, September 14 – Saturday, October 30, 2004

Opening Reception for the artist: September 14, 6 – 8pm, 555 West 24th Street

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present two exhibitions that highlight the myriad accomplishments of painter and sculptor Georg Baselitz. These exhibitions will be held concurrently in both the uptown and the downtown New York galleries.

In Gagosian's Madison Avenue gallery, *Georg Baselitz: The Turning Point: Paintings 1969 – 71* documents a revolutionary shift in the paintings of Baselitz that began in 1969. Although the artist had previously explored a range of artistic styles as diverse as Northern Renaissance panel painting and New York School abstraction, he significantly departed from longstanding artistic conventions when he began in 1969 to turn his painted subjects on their heads. The canvases on view are portraits – depicting Baselitz's wife, his friends, or art world luminaries – or rural landscapes that have been inverted. Baselitz's avant-garde approach, a reaction against the perspectival system employed in figure painting since the Renaissance, has since become characteristic of his painting. An intended effect of such portraits and landscapes is that they seem at first glance to be complete abstractions. Of his inverted subjects, Baselitz has said that, "I must take everything which has been an object of painting – landscape, the portrait and the nude, for example – and paint it upside-down. That is the way to liberate representation from content."

On view in the downtown Chelsea gallery, *Georg Baselitz: Recent Sculptures* features monumental wooden sculptures produced since 2003, as well as several works dating from 1996 through 1997. Baselitz, who has created more than 50 sculptures in wood since 1980, has noted that the medium offers unique advantages: "The same problem can be addressed more directly in sculpture, which is less hedged about with qualifications than painting. It is more primitive and brutal." These larger-than-life sized carvings have each been hewn from a single tree trunk with the aid of axe and a chainsaw – a contemporary approach to traditional German woodcarving. While they invoke the human form, the sculptures do not recall specific people. Paint applied to the figures' surfaces suggests clothing or facial features, but the blocky, hulking bodies seem almost to be caricatures when seen from afar. Baselitz's sculptures, like his paintings, waver between figuration and abstraction, and particularly when viewed at close range, they emphasize surface texture, light, and shadow.

Baselitz's work has been the subject of numerous international exhibitions. A full-scale retrospective was organized by the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1995, and his latest retrospective is on view at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn, Germany through September 5, 2004. Baselitz's most recent honors include the Julio González price in Valencia (2001), the Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Paris (2002), and the Award of Premium Imperiale, Tokyo (2004). The artist lives and works in Germany and Italy.

Accompanying *Georg Baselitz: The Turning Point: Paintings 1969 – 71* is a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Rudi Fuchs, former Director of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. *Georg Baselitz Recent Sculptures* is also documented through an illustrated catalogue, with a foreword by Michael Baxandall, Professor Emeritus of European Art at the University of California, Berkeley, and an essay by Peter Nisbet, Daimler-Benz Curator of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University.

For further information please contact the galleries.