

# GAGOSIAN

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## GEORG BASELITZ

### What if...

March 12–May 2, 2020  
657 Howard Street, San Francisco

Georg Baselitz, *Orangenesser 6 (Orange Eater 6)*, 2019, oil on canvas, 67 × 57 1/8 inches (170 × 145 cm) © Georg Baselitz. Photo: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin

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February 24, 2020

*I don't want to see what I am making. I don't want to have an overview, to create any kind of order that can be controlled visually.*

—Georg Baselitz

Gagosian is pleased to present *What if...*, an exhibition of new paintings by Georg Baselitz. This is his first solo exhibition in the San Francisco gallery.

A pioneer of Neo-Expressionism, Baselitz conjures new formal developments from art historical lineages—his own extensive oeuvre included. Although his paintings focus on the human figure, his raw, vigorous mark making creates new and emotionally charged routes within abstraction.

The oil-on-canvas compositions in *What if...* mark a significant development in Baselitz's technique. The paintings are created with a transfer method: he paints on a piece of unstretched canvas and then presses a second canvas onto the first to make an impression in oils. Through this technique, Baselitz continues to expand his own practice of painting and mark making, finding new ways to treat established subjects.

This exhibition continues Baselitz's dialogue with the dynamic gestures of Willem de Kooning, whose iconic *Woman I* (1950–52) he came across as a student at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Berlin in the landmark 1958 traveling exhibition *New American Painting*. This first encounter had a profound effect on the younger artist and led him to incorporate de Kooning's vivid palette and unique application of paint into his own work. Baselitz also took note of a similar impulse in Roy Lichtenstein's seminal *Brushstrokes* (1965–71) series, and challenges himself in these new compositions to examine the isolated stroke as Lichtenstein did, presenting it as an independent structural element within the larger painting.

Baselitz uses his established motifs to explore the possibilities of the transfer method, allowing new connections to emerge between disparate series and stylistic influences. One group of paintings in *What if...* refers directly to his *Orangenesses* (*Orange Eater*) series (1981–82), in which spiky-haired men are depicted devouring the titular fruit. Other works are derived from a 1974 nude portrait of his wife, Elke, who is shown sitting on a chair with her arms folded and ankles crossed. Rather than mining the figural iconography of these motifs, Baselitz perceives them as objective arrangements of shapes and lines made by paint—transferring their enigmatic markings onto new canvases in a process of looking that oscillates between abstraction and representation.

A fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by James Lawrence and a poem by Patti Smith will accompany the exhibition.

**Georg Baselitz** was born in 1938 in Deutschbaselitz, Germany, and lives and works between Ammersee, Germany; Basel, Switzerland; Imperia, Italy; and Salzburg, Austria. Collections include the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; Fondation Beyeler, Basel; and Tate, London. Exhibitions include *Back then, in between, and today*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2014–15); 56th Biennale di Venezia (2015); *The Heroes*, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (2016, traveled to Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome; and Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain, through 2017); *Baselitz Maniera: Nonconformism as a Source of Imagination*, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Germany (2018); *Works on Paper*, Kunstmuseum Basel (2018); *Six Decades*, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Switzerland (2018, traveled to Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC); *Corpus Baselitz*, Musée Unterlinden, Colmar, France (2018); and *Academy*, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice (2019). In 2019, Baselitz was elected to the Académie des Beaux-Arts in France. A major retrospective of Baselitz's work will be presented at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, in late 2020.

#GeorgBaselitz

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## Press

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