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David Ebony's Top 10 New York Gallery Shows for October

There's still time to catch these, before it's too late.

David Ebony



Installation view, Georg Baselitz, "Jumping Over My Shadow," 2016. Courtesy the artist and Gagosian Gallery.

3. Georg Baselitz at Gagosian Gallery, through October 29.

Some artists get better with age. As evidenced by this show of his recent large-scale paintings and sculptures, "Jumping Over My Shadow," German artist Georg Baselitz is definitely one of them. Now 78, Baselitz (born Hans-Georg Kern) established his career in the 1970s, and became internationally recognized in the '80s as one of the leading German Neo-Expressionists. He was famous for rough-hewn figurative sculptures and gritty paintings with provocative upside-down images of figures and landscapes, addressing in some way the postwar-torn German psyche. He entered the cannon of recent art history, and for a time seemed to be taken for granted. As Baselitz himself remarked to curator Okui Enwezor in an interview for the show's catalogue, "I am certain that the viewers left me a long time ago...I am truly of the opinion that nobody is looking at what I do anymore."

That may all have changed last year when a room devoted to Baselitz's recent oil paintings at the Venice Biennale caused a stir. I, for one, gained a new appreciation for Baselitz's work on the spot. The monumental canvases represented something of a departure. They featured the familiar lone upside-down male figure set against stark black ground. The rendering of the nude figure, however, featured delicate tones, greatly nuanced textures, and fine, feverishly applied networks of black lines that seemed fresh and new to the artist. Somehow he appeared to be getting closer to a mythical place, the essence of painting itself.

“Jumping Over My Shadow” continues this exciting development, with massive, primal sculptures in patinated bronze that resembles wood, and with imposing paintings of an ethereal—and aged—nude male figure. Most of these ghostly self-portraits have titles alluding to a downward motion. *Descending with Marcel*, for instance, bears an explicit reference to Duchamp’s 1912 *Nude Descending a Staircase* and suggests that Baselitz’s primary interests here are in movement, spatial relationships, and the passage of time.