Georg Baselitz

Per Mano

1 September—14 November 2026

Thaddaeus Ropac Seoul

Thaddaeus Ropac Seoul presents *Per Mano*, an exhibition conceived in close collaboration with Georg Baselitz before his passing in April 2026. The show pays homage to the late artist's prodigious oeuvre through two series of monotype paintings that epitomise the final decade of his practice: the *Schatten* (2020) and the *Darkness Goldness* works (2019), never before seen in Korea. It also marks the first time Georg Baselitz's *Schatten* will be showcased since his exhibitions at the Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul (2024) and the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao (2025). Both series reveal the artist's sustained, eminently sensitive engagement with mortality since the seminal *Avignon* cycle he presented at the 56th Venice Biennale curated by Okwui Enwezor in 2015.

Georg Baselitz found inspiration for his *Schatten* [*Shadow*] works in Titian's *Archbishop Filippo Archinto* (c. 1558, Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA). While the Renaissance master's portrait is renowned for its striking veil, it is the curvilinear form of the shadow behind the figure that compelled Georg Baselitz and that he rehearses, upside down, on the left side of each canvas. A hallmark of his oeuvre since 1969, this inversion translates the artist's unconventional approach to the image, 'leading the viewer to experience a new way of seeing that induces an ontological shift,' as curator Pamela Sticht has written. Art historians have likened Georg Baselitz's reversal to the iconography of Saint Peter's Crucifixion, yet the artist sought precisely to eviscerate form of content, blasting the strict distinction between figuration and abstraction at a time when these were inextricable from Soviet-sanctioned Socialist Realism and Western escapism in a fractured Germany.

This is exemplified by the *Schatten* paintings wherein the central amalgam of strokes focuses the viewer's attention on their particular treatment: the tangible velocity of Georg Baselitz's original gestures and their de Kooning-like fluidity, emblematic of his late work; the unique formal variations of each monotype impression; or the constellations of blots that attest to his impulsive practice. In a highly physical process, the artist painted each work on a piece of unstretched canvas on the floor, before pressing the final primed canvas on top of it and forcefully transferring the image using a broom. Upon closer inspection, upside-down skulls materialise with varying degrees of resolution, harking back to the anamorphic *memento mori* in Holbein's *Ambassadors* (1533; National Gallery, London). The aggressive geometry of the more defined skulls evinces the artist's fascination with classical African statuary, in particular Songye sculpted power figures. A leitmotif from Georg Baselitz's first *Pandämonium* works of the 1960s to his monumental *Zero Ende* sculpture (2013), the skull's subtle manifestation turns the series into a potent, indeed prescient, *vanitas*.

In a different pictorial vein, Georg Baselitz's *Darkness Goldness* paintings similarly grapple with the inexorable transience of life. Monumental golden hands emerge from pitch-dark grounds reminiscent of Lucas Cranach the Elder, imbuing the pictorial space with their sublime presence. In stark contrast with Georg Baselitz's early depictions of amputated extremities in his provocatively repulsive *P.D. Füße* series (1960–63) and hypertrophied limbs in the ensuing *Helden* (1965–66), these works propose a more fragile – albeit equally expressive – take on the artist's ageing hand. Art historian José María Parreño discerns 'gnarled limbs, deformed almost beyond recognition by osteoarthritis; flesh macerated by age and labour, like the faces in Fautrier's *Otages*.' Each gilded hand flickers with a spectral quality, heightened by the artist's monotype printing technique. As Georg Baselitz stated, 'I wanted an apparition, something that appears out of the depth.' Some appear skeletal, while others seem evanescent, gradually fading into the atmosphere of Georg Baselitz's painterly universe or petering out into smears, drips and specks of paint in a poignant reflection on the artist's legacy. As curator Bernard Blistène perceptively set forth, 'Baselitz speaks to us […] of the painter's relationship to the transcendence of his project.'

About the artist

Early in his career, Georg Baselitz's work was included in documenta 5 (1972) and 7 (1982). Following the 1980 Venice Biennale, he participated in a series of influential exhibitions: *A New Spirit in Painting* (1981) and *German Art in the Twentieth Century* (1985) at the Royal Academy of Arts, London; and Zeitgeist (1982) at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, presented his first comprehensive retrospective in 1995, which toured the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; and Nationalgalerie, Berlin. Further significant retrospectives were organised by the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, in 1996, and the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in 2007. In 2006 and 2007, the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, and the Albertina, Vienna, were the first to present his *Remix* cycle.

A retrospective of Georg Baselitz's sculptures was held at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (2011–12) and his Avignon series was presented at the Venice Biennale in 2015. His *Heldenbilder* [*Hero Paintings*] and *Neue Typen* [*New Types*] were shown at the Städel Museum, Frankfurt (2016), travelling to the Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome; and Guggenheim Bilbao. To mark the artist's 80th birthday in 2018, comprehensive solo exhibitions were held at the Fondation Beyeler, Basel; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; and Musée Unterlinden, Colmar, France. In 2019, he was elected to the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris and became the first living artist to have an exhibition at the Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, followed by his largest retrospective to date at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, in 2021.

In 2023, numerous exhibitions were held at prestigious institutions internationally in celebration of the artist's 85th birthday. Among them were *Nackte Meister* [*Naked Masters*], an extensive exhibition which presented Georg Baselitz's work in conversation with that of the old masters at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; an exhibition highlighting his sculptural practice at Serpentine Galleries, London; a six-decade retrospective of his drawings at The Morgan Library, New York, which travelled to the Albertina, Vienna; an exhibition of Georg Baselitz's works presented alongside those of Anselm Kiefer at the Kunsten Museum of Modern Art Aalborg (the first exhibition to present a visual dialogue between the two artists since the Venice Biennale in 1980); and individual presentations at the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München at the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; and Museum Würth 2, Künzelsau. These were followed by monographic exhibitions at Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul (2024); Munchmuseet, Oslo (2025); Kode, Bergen (2025); and Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao (2025).

At present, Georg Baselitz is the subject of solo exhibitions at the Museo Novecento, Florence (until 13 September 2026); Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice (until 27 September 2026); Rupertinum, Salzburg (until 4 October 2026); and Museum der Moderne Salzburg (until 18 October 2026).