

## VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE

Venice, Magazzino del Sale - Zattere 266

20 May – 31 October 2021

from Wednesday to Sunday

10.30 am - 6 pm

Reservations are necessary on Saturdays and Sundays, by ministerial decree

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**Vedova accendi la luce** is the title of the exhibition being held in the Magazzino del Sale of the Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova from 20 May to 31 October 2021. Georg Baselitz has created some works based on painting "in the manner" of Vedova especially for this exhibition as a tribute by the German artist to the Venetian master. Other new works on the theme of the so-called "gelato" (*Speiseeis*) are also being shown.

The exhibition is laid out to a design prepared by Fabrizio Gazzarri and Detlev Gretenkort.

The catalogue is published by Marsilio.

The exhibition is supported by Generali Valore Cultura, Generali Italia's long term programme to make art and culture accessible to an ever wider audience and is organized in collaboration with Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London – Paris – Salzburg.

Vedova and Baselitz were linked not only by an artistic understanding, but also a profound and lasting friendship from the early 1960s, begun in Berlin divided by the wall, where Vedova lived for about two years and produced the *Absurdes Berliner Tagebuch '64*. Two years ago Baselitz was the special curator of the *Emilio Vedova di/by Georg Baselitz* exhibition, also in the Magazzino del Sale, where he presented a selection of Vedova works from the 1950s and 1980s. The memory is still particularly vivid of the tribute Baselitz made at the 2007 Venice Biennale to his Venetian friend immediately after his death with a series of paintings of an extraordinary expressive power. Baselitz recalls his first meeting with Vedova's painting in a letter: "I purchased a painting by Emilio, the *Manifesto universale* of 1957, from Rudolf Springer, I bought it as a document, my first look towards the west, to Berlin that time, an abstract picture, with its own foundation (Piranesi) and its own vehemence, with which to fall in love."

As Alfredo Bianchini, President of the Fondazione Vedova, points out, *Vedova accendi la luce* (from the enigmatic - title of one of the paintings exhibited) is "an incredibly evocative exhibition not only because of the originality of the paint sign (again an updated Baselitz, though in the essentially expressionist continuity of his style), but also because (particularly in the part dedicated to Vedova) Baselitz seems to want to play (but especially communicate) with Emilio pretending to imitate him in the informal lines and allusively joking with the paintings' titles. Individuality, uniqueness and exclusiveness are the essential connotations of the art's timbre. Indeed, it is truly unusual that, as in this case, an artist engages intellectually, sentimentally and expressively in the world of another artist."

So the Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova and the City of Venice have - as Philip Rylands recalls

in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue - "the fortune to have Georg Baselitz exhibiting in the majestic spaces of the Magazzini del Sale, Emilio Vedova's former studio. Not only due to the pleasure of hosting an artist of his stature, but also because, despite Vedova's death in 2006, the dialogue continues. It may be said of every great artist that his legacy is not restricted to his work, but extends to the contexts and affinities brought back to life by that work. The friendship between Vedova and Baselitz is an example of this".

The exhibition is organized in collaboration with Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London – Paris – Salzburg.

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## VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE

ALFREDO BIANCHINI

Fondazione Vedova presents a series of new works by Georg Baselitz at the Magazzino del Sale including ten paintings exploring the theme of ice cream (*Speiseeis*) and seven works playing (although the subject is more serious) with the idea of painting "in the manner" of Vedova.

The dialogue between Georg Baselitz and Emilio Vedova began decades ago and continues to this day, even after Emilio's death in 2006. Their dialogue and friendship started in 1963 when Vedova, with an instinctive gesture of human and artistic solidarity, reached Berlin. At that time the city was politically divided between East and West, still in search of a *forma urbis* and its cultural identity, which was still in the making. Emilio's very sensitive antennae made him look for, meet and support young German artists who had also come to Berlin, such as writers, sculptors, painters, and Georg Baselitz. Their meeting marked the beginning of a strong, intense friendship.

In his essay, Philip Rylands questions whether Baselitz and Vedova's friendship was based only on a specific artistic consonance or on a more general and complex interpretation by way of Goethe's novel *Elective Affinities*. In turn, Fabrizio Gazzarri – who, together with Detlev Gretenkort, was involved in planning and designing the exhibition lay-out at the Magazzino del Sale – recalled Emilio telling him, during a Venetian meeting with a German delegation, that Baselitz was not only a great painter but also a dear friend! This friendship has been continually affirmed, manifested and honoured by Georg after Emilio's death.

In 2007, at the Venice Biennale, Georg dedicated as many as six new works to Emilio; in 2015 a Baselitz-Vedova exhibition was organized at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac in Salzburg; in 2016 works by Vedova and Baselitz were again exhibited together at the MKM Museum Küppersmühle, Germany; and more recently in 2019 an exhibition of Vedova's works was curated with masterly rigour by Baselitz himself at the Magazzino del Sale. It included works in black and white dating back to the 1950s and 1980s (the famous large, turbulent *Teleri* by Vedova).

The current exhibition is incredibly evocative, not only for the originality of the painter's pictorial sign. We see a renewed Baselitz, even if he paints in continuity with his expressionistic language. The exhibition is evocative also because – in particular in the part dedicated to Vedova – Baselitz seems to be playing (and, above all, conversing) with Emilio, pretending to imitate his informal traits and joking allusively with the titles of the paintings.

The title of the exhibition, *Vedova accendi la luce* (*Vedova, Turn On the Light*, 2020), taken from the title of a painting on display, is enigmatic and difficult to understand. However, it is not necessary to understand the title, because its evocative power is in any case remarkable: could it be the light of a rose coloured sign revealing, in fact, a slight luminosity in comparison to Vedova's favourite black sign? But that does not seem to be the case, since the same pink sign appears again in a painting to which Baselitz gave the opposite title, *Vedova spegni la luce* (*Vedova, Turn Off the Light*, 2020).

It only rarely happens that an artist engages intellectually, emotionally, and expressively in the world of another artist. Individuality, uniqueness, exclusivity are the usual features of an artist and the hallmark of art. Such a hallmark is not normally shared and reciprocated in the world of artists, even when a friendship has developed between them. However, this exchange did take place and continues to take place *in their own very special way* between Georg and Emilio. The reference to elective

affinities is correct, but we can go *"beyond"* that, or refer to what comes *before* that. What I have in mind is their dialogue! *"Dialogue"* is an ancient word. We recognise it from the Greek and Latin worlds: even from their etymological roots, which are similar in the two languages. Their ancient roots mean and evoke "the word." Words make mankind different from any other being and I believe that Georg feels an insuppressible desire to speak and continue to speak with Emilio. They continue to speak through their signs, which are expressive even before being expressionistic. It is the desire to continue to understand and discover each other, mutually, that keeps their friendship alive.

An exhibition, as everyone knows, is always the fruit of the work of many: Georg Baselitz and his team, Thaddaeus Ropac, a fundamental promoter and essential driving force for this event, together with Silvia Davoli and the Gallery staff, the team of Fondazione Vedova, Philip Rylands (newly appointed member of the Board of Directors of Fondazione Vedova) and Fabrizio Gazzarri, for their important writings in the catalogue, published by Marsilio Editori; and Detlev Gretenkort for his contribution to the installation at the Magazzino del Sale. Fondazione Vedova thanks them all.

## VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE

FABRIZIO GAZZARRI

### BASELITZ THE VENETIAN?

*Only painting has allowed me to see all the light that still exists in the dark.*  
Vincent van Gogh

I remember in detail the exact moment, many years ago, when I was introduced to the work of the great German artist Georg Baselitz.

The Vedova household was in turmoil that morning, preparing for the imminent visit of a group of German gallery owners, and we were waiting with Emilio at the large windows overlooking the San Marco basin in Venice. The view from those windows is incredible: a concerto of light and matter in motion, an impressive glimpse of just how much beauty our tormented world can offer.

Vedova was smiling, which he rarely did, occupied with leafing through the catalogue of a German gallery that he had worked with and that had worked with his dear friend Baselitz, whom he had met during his stay in Berlin around 1963.

His attention was caught by the image of an upside-down eagle, painted with aggressive and paint-heavy brushstrokes that expressed all the power and charm of this legendary lord of the skies, bright, and watchful of all things on this earth. With delight, Emilio told me the painter of the eagle was a friend of his, a great artist. And in that moment he began an extraordinary lesson in art history, typical of the lessons that Vedova knew how to give with generosity and skilfulness.

The artworks Baselitz has created expressly for the exhibition that Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova has the honour to host at the Magazzino del Sale, come across as a uniform series; a large installation that is part of and interacts with the fifteenth-century space, which these tumultuous and indecipherable paintings seem surprisingly in tune with. For centuries, in fact, the Magazzino del Sale were a hub of work and criticality in the Republic of Venice, and they are an integral part of the complex history of man and of the subsidence that Venice has often suffered.

There could be no place or context more in keeping with these latest Baselitz paintings, with their defiant existential promptings and their insidious questions. These large canvases – all identical dimensions, positioned equidistant from each other, and swooping upwards in a vertical format – are arranged in accordance with Baselitz's rigorous and radical installation plan that rejects formal and complaisant compromises.

The result is a sequence that beats a sharp, recurring and insistent rhythm amidst which the beholder is permeated by silent energy frequencies, apparitions that evoke human and sentient memories, quivers of lives suspended in a timeless vacuum. Baselitz has narrowed the gap between self and the truth: Has Venice perhaps entered his heart?

There is something familiar, in fact, in the new Baselitz paintings exhibited at the Fondazione Vedova, in this unstoppable city with its neverending emotional projection that leads us to intensely experience the entirely human hesitation between the need for a reassuring centre and the anguished evaporation of everything... Might it not be in this very movement that we encounter beauty as imperfect beings?

Baselitz's painted figures reveal an evolution towards dramatic disappearances, figures that are dematerializing, dissolving in intense expressive waves, as if they were painted on the (Venetian?) waters in a slow return to the indistinct, to pure light. As if an inexorable wave had decisively rolled over the field of pictorial action in Baselitz's works, and then retreated, taking with it all jetsam and useless burdens.

Along this cathartic path, a progressive liberation is taking place that jettisons all oppressive and excessive matter, an explosive fragmentation that causes the painted images to abandon the continuity of the mark and of the paint. In this removal of matter, gravity loses direction; the compositional structures break down, taking on a new order that obeys other laws, other potential (cosmic?) dimensions.

It is no longer a matter of simplistic comparison between realism and abstraction, which ultimately nowadays would be a laughable debate, but of a necessary inner summon that Baselitz brings into play by courageously taking risks. It is a seductive journey that is both profoundly and authentically free, and that honours this artist who, through his work, is always able to follow the most difficult paths, swimming against the tide. Baselitz's stance has always been one of "alterity" in the face of the currents of his times and our own.

*Eiskunst mit Gegenwind (Figure Skating with Headwind, 2020)*, *Vanille (Vanilla, 2020)*, *Blaubeer (Blueberry, 2020)*, *Vedova accendi la luce (Vedova, Turn On the Light, 2020)* are just a few of the titles that accompany this series of paintings with paradoxical and enigmatic energy.

Baselitz's need to shake up and arouse the visual space with a sardonic and irritating title has its roots in his youth, when he read the novels and plays by Antonin Artaud, Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco, and it continues to burn brightly in the heart of his stylistic and aesthetic approach. Baselitz's paintings contain the consciousness where there are no words that suffice, no answers that measure up... just, perhaps, the small joy of a simple daily act, somewhat sweet, somewhat affectionate.

Will these works by Georg Baselitz, an artist of rupture as Emilio Vedova was, succeed in making us accept the fleeting and painful fragility of our lives? Will we be capable of hearing them, and reawakening our organic, lost physicality as humans?

## VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE

PHILIP RYLANDS

### GEORG BASELITZ, DOVE VA?

Georg Baselitz is, in his own words, an Existentialist.<sup>1</sup> He cannot mean this in the numbed sense now current in the media, that this or that is a matter of survival, of continuing to exist, without even the gloss of some ontological subtlety, but rather in a sense of which Jean-Paul Sartre would have approved, that an artist conducts himself as a free and responsible agent, determining his own development through acts of the will.

The question arises, how does this manifests itself in Baselitz's painting? To begin with it means that he could not, from this position, build his artistic persona on the work of others – others who may be the great masters, whether modern (Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse) or ancient (Peter Paul Rubens, Titian), to name two painterly examples. There may be what have been called "elective affinities" – a foot severed at the shin by Baselitz (P.D., 1963) has both its subject matter and its palette in common with Théodore Géricault's studies for *Le Radeau de La Méduse* (*The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818–19). But these are isolated instances. Wolfgang Goethe's concept, popularised in 1809 by his novel *Elective Affinities*, is better applied by Carla Schulz-Hoffmann in a more historically precise way to refer to Baselitz's friendship with Emilio Vedova.<sup>2</sup>

From 1958 to 1959, the Museum of Modern Art's celebrated travelling exhibition *The New American Painting* brought American Abstract Expressionism to Europe. It was presented at the Hochschule für bildende Künste in West Berlin. This coincided with the arrival in Berlin of a travelling Jackson Pollock retrospective curated by Frank O'Hara which was derived from the 1957 São Paulo Biennial. The latter show included Hans Namuth's film of Pollock at work. The Berlin wall wasn't up yet, and Baselitz remembers seeing both exhibitions. Paintings by Willem de Kooning and Pollock may have struck him especially – not because they were abstract (neither de Kooning's *Woman I* [1950] nor Pollock's *Number 27* [1951] were) but because they were harbingers of a figurative expressionism updated from the Brücke. Yet as we have seen, Existentialism prevented Baselitz from merging his identity with the art of others.

Like Jannis Kounellis, who saw the MoMA exhibition in Milan a few months earlier, the twenty-year-old Baselitz would have learned not that he should become an American Abstract Expressionist but that there were no longer any strictures on what a work of art could look like or how it could be made.

At the beginning of his career Baselitz declined to paint or draw in any way that might have been expected of him (hence his expulsion from the Hochschule für bildende und angewandte Kunst in East Berlin, in 1957) and opted instead for an ugliness in technique, palette, forms and motif exemplified by the priapic child in his painting *Die grosse Nacht im Eimer* (*The Big Night down the Drain*, 1962–63). This was for him the construction of an identity, by means of the *tabula rasa* and of zeroing out: an act of negation that would have been sanctioned by Sartre. Erasing the past, above all the Abstract Expressionist and Art Informel movements, was in the air around 1960, although it is hard to associate Baselitz (nor, one supposes, would he allow this) with the impulses that compelled Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana, the ZERO group in Düsseldorf, Azimuth in Milan, Fluxus, or Primary Structures in New York to do this. In particular Baselitz rejected abstraction as it had come to be understood in twentieth-century art, whether geometric or expressionist. Opting for realism meant a rejection of the Utopian, mystical or neurological implications of abstract imagery and of the notion that art must be

the expression of the spirit, the subconscious, the unconscious, or any other ill-defined wellspring of art making. Choosing to be figurative was coherent with the outward looking Existentialist attitude, that of a free agent determining his or her own development through acts of the will.

But mimetic realism, the imitation of nature, was not the answer either, and here again Existentialism opened a door. It is sometimes used as a way of understanding the figurative sculpture of Sartre's friend Alberto Giacometti. How can the realism of Giacometti, explicit in his closing the door to André Breton and the Surrealist movement in 1935, and explicit in his frustration at being unable to render what he so intensely saw, be reconciled to the pitted surfaces of his sculptures? The answer is that Existentialism favoured *matière*, clumsily translated as "matter" (a word made even clumsier by the neologism "Matterism"). Sartre favoured Jean Fautrier, whose art, with its heavy impasto, was at the height of its popularity in 1960, the year Fautrier won the Grand Prize for painting at the Venice Biennale. So the grunginess of Baselitz's paint – unmixed and reckless of the smoothed brushstroke, the tonal colour and the calculated contour – embodies the honesty of the medium, of its nature as *matière*. Existentialism is centered on the ego, so the question of whether or not the product is *pleasing* to others, not only aesthetically but in any way whatsoever with, at the very least, *belle peinture*, becomes entirely beside the point. The only relevant opinion is that of the artist himself.

This is another way to understand Baselitz's celebrated act, from 1969, of turning the motif of the painting upside down: not just a way of inducing a pseudo-abstract vision of the motif, not just a philosophical gesture of looking downward (to the abyss? the inferno? the opposite of the aspirational, or the Nietzschean), as was, he has said, the act of painting on the floor (or more accurately in the sense Leo Steinberg said of Robert Rauschenberg's methods, of the flatbed<sup>3</sup>), but a way of dislocating the image from sentiment or empathy, whether that of the artist or of the viewer. This is a very radical strategy, very frustrating for those with hard-wired expectations of what the purpose of art is, and very Existential. In 1961 Baselitz's first exhibition, jointly with Eugen Schönebeck, was held where no one would have expected, in an apartment building scheduled for demolition – the antithesis of an art venue. In the same spirit, the two artists printed their *Pandemonic Manifestos* in West Berlin in 1961–62. Poetical but ranting, obscene, chthonophagic, and nihilistic, the text negates itself when it closes with the phrase "All writing is crap."

Again, in a stoic spirit of renunciation, Baselitz was not interested in being an international, or at least a Western artist. This was consistent with the perversity of his Existentialism, whereby he felt kinship with Outsider art, with Adolf Wölfli, the Prinzhorn Collection in Heidelberg and Jean Dubuffet's Art brut. Interestingly, he accepted nevertheless that he was ineradicably German, or even Saxon, being born in Deutschbaselitz in the region of Upper Lusatia, and that this led naturally to an art that was ugly. He implied an affinity of Outsider art with provincialism when, very early in his career, he painted "uglified" versions of portraits by Louis Ferdinand von Rayski, a minor nineteenth-century Saxon, who composed in the manner of Franz von Lenbach. It was not that he had to accept *something*, in order to overcome paralysis but that being German was simply the deck of cards he had been handed, and it behooved him to play them.

Nevertheless, internationalism was to catch up and overtake him. He acquired an international reputation when he and Anselm Kiefer exhibited in the German pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 1980.<sup>4</sup> A year later Baselitz was selected as a beacon of *A New Spirit in Painting* (the new spirit being that of figuration) in a landmark exhibition at the Royal Academy, London. The latter show has the appearance of being developed out of the former, which included the debut of Achille Bonito Oliva's "Transavanguardia". They were both occasions for celebrating the mildly oneiric realism of Balthus, an artist who Baselitz admires. Despite himself Baselitz had become a part of something international. It is not that fame mitigated the fact of his being a loner, but that acceptance of his Germanic "ugliness" by the art world dissipated its Existential necessity and its subversive power to alienate.

Let us turn then to the paintings exhibited here. Ten are on the theme of ice cream (*Speiseeis*). The dense magma of pigment, of *matière*, that is characteristic of Baselitz's most expressionist paintings, has thinned out. The reason may be only technical: the unusual process of impressing a second canvas on the painted first canvas, placed horizontally near the ground, and then its removal in the manner of a monotype, causes the first canvas to withhold large quantities of paint.<sup>5</sup> Knowing this



it makes one aware of Baselitz's proficiency (he works with almost no assistants) in creating viable images from a hazardous and accident-prone method. It also distances the artist from the outcome. Therefore Baselitz still works today to dissociate his paintings from the psyche. Yet the lightness, the palette, and the virtuosity embody what seems to be a change in Baselitz's mood, replacing Existential rage with a degree of intellectual detachment, symbolically enacted in the lifting technique.

Though not portraits *per se*, the ice cream paintings are images of the artist's wife, Elke.<sup>6</sup> They are lyrical and good humoured. Like Wayne Thiebaud's *Sundaes*, Baselitz's paintings evoke an indulgent outing to a hygienic place, the *Eisdiele (Ice Cream Parlour)*. The white of the ground shines through on the figures like sunlight, and the flavours in the titles – strawberry, lemon, vanilla and blueberry – find a counterpart in the colours. The loosely connected ribbons of pigment contain a visual pun: *Eislaufen* means ice-skating, and for Baselitz the ethereal late paintings of De Kooning are like coloured traces of an ice skater's blades.

The punning title of one of Baselitz's *Eisdiele* group, *À la, la - Licht und Stein (À la, la - "Licht" and "Stein", 2020)*, tells us the colours are also from Pop art and Roy Lichtenstein. Another, *Eiskunst mit Gegenwind (Figure Skating with Headwind, 2020)* may flippantly refer to the spattering of paint spots to upside-down Elke's right. With *(Max) Beckmann in der Eisdiele (2020)* Baselitz thumbs his nose at a hostile critic who described his painting as "Beckmann in an ice cream parlour". Fürst Pückler is, in fact, a Neapolitan ice cream, in layers and shaped like a bombe. It is also the name of the Saxon nobleman Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785–1871), who became a prince in 1811. Pückler, admired by Baselitz, led a colourful life as a courtier, soldier, lover, author and landscape architect. His most celebrated achievement was redesigning his estate in Bad Muskau into an English park, twenty-five miles from where Baselitz was born (now a World Heritage Site).

Titles serve Baselitz entertainingly as an opportunity to add meaning. Breton reputedly could not look at works of art unless they were endowed with a title. In 1927, during Yves Tanguy's early association with the Surrealists, he is reported to have spent hours looking through a treatise on "metapsychics" (*sic*) in search of adequately fanciful and poetic names for his paintings.<sup>7</sup>

Titles for Baselitz are also riddles. Of the seven painting titles dedicated to Emilio Vedova, Baselitz's older contemporary, two titles are anagrams of the artis surname: *Dove va* and *Va dove*. The former, deprived of the question mark it would normally have, merely means "where he goes". Likewise, its *pendant*, *Va dove*, is not an interrogation and could be translated as "he goes where". It is, as Peter Iden has noticed, a reference to the title of a 1983 painting by Vedova, *Da dove*, a livid masterpiece in black, yellow and purple.<sup>8</sup> It reminds us of Paul Gauguin's *D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous? (Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?, 1897–98, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)*.

In three other paintings, Vedova turns a light on and off. In one painting the figure is pink, while in two more, the figures are entirely in a flesh tone. Baselitz hints that there is a connection to Lucio Fontana's *Concetti spaziali, Attese (1959)*. Fontana's paintings from his latter series, with only a single cut (*taglio*) penetrating a monochrome ground, have been associated with Gustave Courbet's *L'Origine du monde (The Origin of the World, 1866)*, or at least with that part of the female anatomy so vividly foregrounded in Courbet's painting.

If there is any sexual connotation in Baselitz's paintings, this would seem to be corroborated by a punning reference to Vedova in *Ditta vedovella apparecchiature elettriche (Vedovella Company Electrical Instruments, 2020)*. While there does not seem to be an Italian company by this name, the *fontana vedovella* is a type of street fountain common in Venice with a more or less phallic appearance.

Fontana is also concealed in the title *Il motore si è fermato per un pelo di barba (The Motor Stalled Because of a Hair of the Beard, 2020)*. Leaving aside that both Baselitz and Vedova sported beards (Vedova for his entire adult life – it was a hallmark), this would seem to refer to Fontana's *Concetto spaziale, Attese 140 (c. 1968)* in the *Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* in Brussels. Fontana was in the habit of inscribing some phrase or notion of the moment on the back of his canvases in order to discourage fakes. On *Attese 140* he wrote "*un pelo di barba, 2 peli di barba / 1000 peli di barba, ma che barba / Vedova*" (*one hair of beard, 2 hairs of a beard / 1000 hairs of beard but what a beard / Vedova*). This most likely refers to a public spat with Vedova following *Expo '67* in Montreal. Vedova had been

responsible for the installation of the ambitious Italian pavilion, with an environment titled *Percorso/Plurimo/Luce*, generating considerable acclaim, publicity and probably envy. Fontana complained in a magazine interview in November 1967 that Vedova had incorrectly claimed that his pavilion was the first use of artificial light in art.<sup>9</sup> In May of the following year Vedova responded in the same magazine: "There's no need, dear Fontana, to 'get angry'. [...] Despite the beard, I have no pretense to be god.", presumably an allusion to the opening verses of Genesis.<sup>10</sup> The inscription on the verso of Fontana's canvas is therefore irritable and dismissive – the reference to the beard is both *ad hominem* and an Italian exclamatory idiom (*che barba!*), akin to "what a bore".

Despite the allusions to the artist in these *hommages*, witty and affectionate as they are, Baselitz's Vedova paintings are not portraits. They allude to the Expressionist style and all-over composition of Vedova's paintings, and some are in his signature colour of black. In each an apparently naked figure sits on a simple chair, and with this elementary iconography Baselitz has insinuated vicinity, companionship and dialogue, rather as Vincent van Gogh wistfully did in Arles in December 1888, when he juxtaposed paintings of his own empty chair and another of his friend Gauguin: portraits *in absentia* of the two friends, and a contrast of their two personalities.

Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova, and the city of Venice, are fortunate to have Georg Baselitz exhibiting in the grandiose spaces of the Magazzini del Sale, where the former studio of Emilio Vedova was also located. Not only for the pleasure of welcoming an artist of Baselitz's stature but also because, notwithstanding the death of Vedova in 2006, the dialogue continues. It can be said of any great artist that his legacy is not only in his work but in the contexts and affinities which bring that work to life. The friendship between Vedova and Baselitz is such a legacy.

1  
Online conversation with the artist, 18 March 2021. This affirmation is repeated in other places and contexts.

2  
Carla Schulz-Hoffmann, "Misunderstandings, Elective Affinities, or Both at Once?", in *Baselitz-Vedova*, exh. cat., MKM Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, Duisburg, 2016, pp. 32ff.

3  
Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, New York and Oxford, 1972, pp. 88ff.

4  
Baselitz relates that one reviewer of the Biennale, in a kind of mental short-circuit, transposed the attribute of Nazism of the German pavilion built by Ernst Haiger in 1938 onto the two artists who were showing there. This would be interesting to document by means of a search through the Biennale archives (ASAC).

5  
One of the last series of works by Vedova, before he passed away in 2006, consisted of lavish, oily, polychrome monotypes.

6  
Confirmed by the artist in conversation.  
See note 1.

7  
Charles Robert Richet, *Traité de métapsychique*, Paris, 1922.

8

Peter Iden, "Order – Not from Here, Nor from Today", in *Baselitz-Vedova*, op. cit., p. 16.

9

"Intervista con Lucio Fontana in occasione delle sue ultime personali", *bit*, y. 1, no. 5, Milan, November 1967, pp. 18–20.

10

For Vedova at Expo '67 and the controversy with Fontana, see Germano Celant, ed., *Vedova De America*, Milan 2019 (English edition, 2020), pp. 380–95.

## VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE

### THE FOUNDATION

The main aim of Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova, created by the artist and his wife, is to promote the art and work of Vedova and to highlight his importance in the history of 20th century art through a series of initiatives, such as studies, research projects, analyses, exhibitions, itineraries and teaching spaces, conferences, scholarships and prizes.

The activities of the Fondazione, chaired by Alfredo Bianchini, faithfully reflect the will of the great Venetian artist, who, when thinking together with his wife about the nascent Fondazione, stressed how the safekeeping and conservation of his works should not be separated from initiatives to promote knowledge about his art, also in collaboration with major international museums and cultural institutions. Moreover, he wished these initiatives should constantly be directed at exploring the themes of "painting – space – time – history", which are in fact the fundamental elements of his art and his commitment. Fondazione, near its headquarter at Zattere, has two exhibition spaces.

The Magazzino del Sale, designed and installed by Renzo Piano with Alessandro Traldi and Maurizio Milan, for years entrusted to the artistic and scientific curatorship of Germano Celant with Fabrizio Gazzarri as Director of the Collection and Archive, is equipped with the latest technology for conserving and showing works of art to the public and will also host works by artists from all over the world to create a dialectical dialogue with Vedova's works. From June 2010, the restoration of the artist's studio – again effected under the supervision of Renzo Piano – enabled the Fondazione to have available the Spazio Vedova, a multifunctional space able to host events as well as exhibitions.

## VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE

### List of works

*Eiskunst mit Gegenwind* (Figure Skating with Headwind)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Blaubeer* (Blueberry)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Fürst Pückler*  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Beckmann in der Eisdiele* (Beckmann in the Ice Cream Parlour)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Eisdiele* (Ice Cream Parlour)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Speiseeis* (Ice Cream)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Limone* (Lemon)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Emilio macht das Licht aus* (Emilio Turns Off the Light)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Erdbeere* (Strawberry)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Va dove* (He Goes Where)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*À la, la - Licht und Stein* (À la, la - 'Licht' and 'Stein')  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Dove va* (Where He Goes)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Vanille* (Vanilla)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Il motore si è fermato per un pelo di barba* (The Motor Stalled Because of a Hair of the Beard)  
2020  
Oil on canvas  
300 x 212 cm

*Ditta vedovella apparecchiature elettriche* (Vedovella Company  
Electrical Instruments)

2020

Oil on canvas

300 x 212 cm

*Vedova accendi la luce* (Vedova Turn On the Light)

2020

Oil on canvas

300 x 212 cm

*Vedova spegni la luce* (Vedova Turn Off the Light)

2020

Oil on canvas

300 x 212 cm

## VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE

### GEORG BASELITZ

Born 23rd January 1938 as Hans-Georg Kern at Deutschbaselitz, in Saxony. He lives and works between Ammersee (Germany) Salzburg (Austria) and Imperia (Italy). He studied painting at Art Academies in East and then West Berlin.

In 1963 his first solo show at the Werner & Katz Gallery in Berlin ended in scandal and the confiscation of two pictures. In 1965 won six-month scholarship to the Villa Romana in Florence and in 1969 his *Der Wald auf dem Kopf (The Wood on its Head)* canvas initiated his practice of inverting his subjects. In 1972, participated in *documenta 5* in Kassel (and ten years later in *documenta 7*); in 1975 exhibited at the 13th Bienal de São Paulo; in 1980 he presented his first sculpture, *Modell für eine Skulptur (Model for a sculpture)* at the German Pavilion of the 39th Venice Biennale, returning in 1993 and 2015 to exhibit at the Biennale's International Pavilion. From 1976 he has kept a studio in Italy, first in Florence, then at Castiglion Fiorentino (Arezzo) – of which he was made an honorary citizen in 2010, and from 1987 in Imperia, where he was also made an honorary citizen (2006).

Taught at the State Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe from 1978 to 1983, and at the Berlin Hochschule der Künste from 1983 to 1988 and from 1992 to 2003. In 1986 was awarded the Kaiserring prize by the city of Goslar.

From the late 1980s has held a series of large-scale personal shows, including at Kunsthaus in Zurich, 1990; Guggenheim Museum in New York, 1995, moving on to Los Angeles County Museum, thence to Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington and Berlin's Nationalgalerie; Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, 1996; Royal Academy in London, 2007; at Neapolitan Museo MADRE, 2008; again at Paris Musée d'Art Moderne 2011; at Fondation Beyeler in Riehen (Basel), 2018. In France he was invested Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1987 (Officier 1992, Commandeur 2002) and in 2012 Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur; other international honours include the Japanese Praemium Imperiale for painting in 2004. In 2018 created stage design and costumes for Wagner's Parsifal at the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich.

In Venice, he has recently (2019) curated a major exhibition of Emilio Vedova's work at the Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova and himself exhibited at the Gallerie dell'Accademia. In 2021 his works are being shown at the Fondazione Vedova in Venice, and concurrently at the Palazzo Grimani.

# BASELITZ

FONDAZIONE EMILIO E ANNABIANCA VEDOVA

## VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE

### FONDAZIONE EMILIO E ANNABIANCA VEDOVA

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Clelia Caldesi Valeri

Sonia Osetta

Maddalena Pugliese

#### Editorial Coordinator

Clelia Caldesi Valeri

#### Exhibit Organization Support

Maddalena Pugliese

#### Archive

Sonia Osetta

#### Digital Archive and IT

Bruno Zanon

#### Visual Identity

Twin Studio, Milano

Elena Pedrazzini

#### Communication and Press Office

Studio Systema, Venezia

Adriana Vianello

Andrea de Marchi

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EMILIO E ANNABIANCA  
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# BASELITZ

## VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE

FONDAZIONE EMILIO E ANNABIANCA VEDOVA

**GEORG BASELITZ**  
**VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE**  
**20 MAY - 31 OCTOBER 2021**

### **Production**

Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova  
with Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London – Paris – Salzburg

### **Head of Exhibition**

Fabrizio Gazzarri

### **Organization and Coordination**

Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova  
Elena Oyelami Bianchini  
Maddalena Pugliese

### **and**

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London – Paris – Salzburg  
Silvia Davoli, Associate Director

### **Editorial Coordination**

Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova  
Clelia Caldesi Valeri

### **and**

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London – Paris – Salzburg  
Oona Doyle, Head of Publications

### **Archive**

Sonia Osetta

### **IT and Digital Archive**

Bruno Zanon

### **Technical Collaboration to the Installation Project**

Agnese Alfonsi

### **Lighting**

Avi Service, Venezia  
Antonio Vidal

### **Transports**

Apice, Venezia

### **Insurance**

Generali Italia spa

### **Exhibition Graphic Design**

Twin Studio, Milano  
Elena Pedrazzini  
Elisabetta Bianchi  
Nina Leo

### **Communication and Press Office**

Studio Systema, Venezia  
Adriana Vianello  
Andrea De Marchi  
Livia Sartori di Borgoricco

### **Catalogue**

Marsilio Editori, Venezia

### **Catalogue Graphic Design**

Linie 3, Salzburg

### **Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova thanks to**

Georg Baselitz  
*with Georg Baselitz Studio*  
Detlev Gretenkort  
Julia Westner  
Leeor A. Engländer

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London – Paris – Salzburg

## VEDOVA ACCENDI LA LUCE

Magazzino del Sale, Zattere 266  
20th May – 31th October 2021

### **Ticket Office and Bookshop**

Spazio Vedova, Zattere 50

wednesday - sunday

10.30 – 18.00

Ticket office closes 17.30

On Saturday and Sunday the access will be granted upon a telephone booking (+39 041 2410833)

### **Tickets**

Full **8 euro**

Discounted admission **6 euro**

Students **4 euro**

Family (two adults with underage kids) **16 euro**

Children up to 10 **free**

### **Discounted admission euro 6**

Employees and customers of Generali Group

Senior visitors over 65 yrs

FAI members

TCI members

Touristic guide without group, with current ID

Disabled visitors escort included

Journalists (upon presentation of a valid press card for the current year)

Military or Police officers (in uniform or with an identification document)

Clients of Garage San Marco (showing the parking ticket)

### **Students euro 4**

Young visitors from 11 to 18 yrs

Students unders 26 yrs (with current student ID)

### **Free Admission**

Children up to 10 yrs

Journalists (upon accreditation)

Group escort (15 people minimum)

Disabled escort

On Wednesdays residents in Venice

Members of the ASSOCIAZIONE GUIDE TURISTICHE DI VENEZIA

School groups

[fondazionevedova.org](http://fondazionevedova.org)



**Georg Baselitz**  
***Vedova accendi la luce***

pp. 96 with 38 color ills.  
euro 29,00  
23x29, hardcover  
bilingual Italian and English edition  
ISBN 9788829712786

**A small, refined book, as is typical of Baselitz, documenting the new work he produced in 2020.**

A solo exhibition held at the Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova in Venice is the occasion to investigate the brand new production by Georg Baselitz. The new 17 works, which are all large vertical canvases (3 x 2.12 metres), are broken down into two series: one series of 7 canvases dedicated to Emilio Vedova, and the other of 10 canvases depicting Baselitz's wife, Elke. The titles of the works on Vedova, characterized by the *Witz*, or jokes, with which Baselitz enjoys catching out his audience, allow us to grasp certain details regarding the longstanding friendship between the two artists. Similarly, in the series of works with Elke, the jocular titles and the *Speiseeis (Ice Cream)* theme offer a playful, colourful and poetic depiction of the woman who has shared the artist's life for more than sixty years.

**Georg Baselitz** was born in Saxony, in 1938. Since the mid-twentieth century, and in reaction to the human suffering and the tragedy of the Second World War, he has contributed significantly to shaping a new identity for German art. From 1960, his influence began to leave its mark on international art too, reaching global fame after the exhibition with Anselm Kiefer in the German Pavilion at the 1980 Venice Biennale and with the London exhibition *A New Spirit in Painting* at the Royal Academy one year later.