

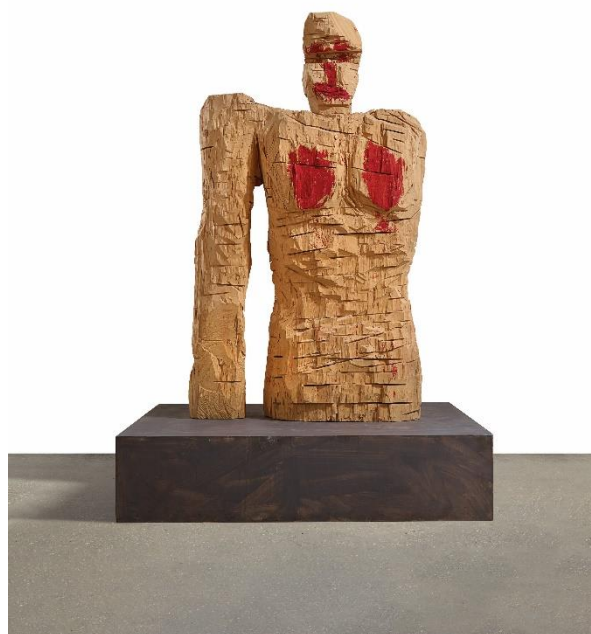
CHRISTIE'S

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TWO MASTERPIECES BY GEORG BASELITZ *ELKE I* AND *FRAU PAGANISMUS* FROM THE HESS ART COLLECTION

COINCIDING WITH THE ARTIST'S 85TH YEAR

OFFERED AT AUCTION FOR THE FIRST TIME
IN THE 20TH / 21ST CENTURY: LONDON EVENING SALE



Georg Baselitz, *Elke I* (1975, estimate: £2,500,000-3,500,000)

Georg Baselitz, *Frau Paganismus* (1994, estimate: £4,000,000-6,000,000)

London – Two masterpieces by Georg Baselitz will highlight Christie's 20th / 21st Century: London Evening Sale on 28 February 2023. *Elke I* (1975, estimate: £2,500,000-3,500,000) and *Frau Paganismus* (1994, estimate: £4,000,000-6,000,000) are being offered at auction for the first time from the prestigious Hess Art Collection, who acquired them shortly after they were created by the artist. Unveiled in New York, they will be exhibited in London from 22 to 28 February. *Elke I* is also on view in Hong Kong until 10 February. This moment precedes a number of prestigious exhibitions which will take place internationally celebrating the artist's career in this milestone year for Georg Baselitz.

Tessa Lord, Acting Head of Department, Post-War and Contemporary Art London, and Edmond Francey, International Director, Post-War and Contemporary Art: *"Coinciding with the artist's 85th birthday, we are thrilled to offer two extraordinary masterpieces by Georg Baselitz from the distinguished Hess Art Collection. Recognised internationally as a leading German artist, his sculptures and paintings have been a radical influence on contemporary art practice since the 1950s. *Elke I* depicts the artist's wife, who has been one of Baselitz's most enduring subjects since he first painted her in 1969. It is presented alongside *Frau Paganismus*, a monumental sculpture born from a single colossal piece of wood which challenges sculptural convention with the same energy Baselitz brings to painting. Both reimagining the female form, the two works will offer viewers insight into distinct elements of the artist's oeuvre and we look forward to exhibiting them in our international salerooms ahead of the auction on 28 February."*

Frau Paganismus represents a crucial strand of Georg Baselitz's practice: monumental sculpture. Towering over two metres high, a female torso looms like an ancient idol. Carved using a chainsaw, axe and chisel from a single colossal piece of wood, the surface is hacked into rough planes and lacerated fissures. *Frau Paganismus* exudes an aura of indomitable power. Daubs of bright red pigment mark her face and breasts, heightening the sculpture's raw, primal presence. Created in Baselitz's studio in the castle of Schloss Derneburg, whose cavernous space allowed him to work at an immense scale, she echoes the totems and fetishes of African sculpture, and also the mysterious, crude wooden cult figures that have been found preserved in German peat bogs. *Frau Paganismus* was included in the artist's landmark first US retrospective, which opened at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1995, and in the major exhibition 'Baselitz – Sculpteur' at the Musée D'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 2011-12. The work is the largest among a group of ten red-painted sculptures Baselitz created in the mid-1990s: related heads and torsos from the series are in major museum collections, including *Männlicher Torso* (1993, Nationalgalerie Berlin), *Ding mit Arm* (1993, Hamburger Kunsthalle), *Sonderling* (1993, Museum Kuppersmühle, Duisburg) and *Rautenkopf* (1993, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich).

Elke I is a luminous portrait of Baselitz's wife, Elke Kern-Baselitz, painted in the artist's revolutionary upside-down style. Captured in expressive, glowing strokes of violet and umber against a pearlescent white ground, Elke is painted with warmth and tenderness. This particular work heralds a period in which Baselitz, who had recently moved with Elke to the liberating environs of Derneburg, developed a heightened concern for his compositions' formal power, dialoguing with the Abstract Expressionists who had inspired him early in his career. Against the light-filled backdrop, Elke's raised left arm and the brisk diagonals of her clothing create a dynamic painterly structure that matches the vigour and vibrancy of a work by Kline or de Kooning. *Elke I* was included in the landmark dedicated retrospective 'Georg Baselitz: Portraits of Elke' at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, in 1997. Portraits of Elke from the mid-1970s are held in major museum collections, including *Elke* (1976) (Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas) and *Nude Elke* (1977) (Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven).

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