

41 Georg Baselitz

Deutschbaselitz/Saxony 1938 – 2026

Untitled (Cross). 1964–1965/66

India ink, chalk, wax crayon, pencil and opaque white on paper. 39,7 × 32,5 cm (15 5/8 × 12 3/4 in.). Monogrammed lower right: GB. Signed and dated in chalk on the reverse: G Baselitz 1965/1966 Mai. [3182] Framed.

Provenance

Private collection, North Rhine–Westphalia (acquired in 1995 at Galerie Fred Jahn, Munich; on long-term loan to Museum Folkwang, Essen from 2020–2026)

EUR 60,000–80,000

USD 70,600–94,100

The cross is a central motif in the work of Georg Baselitz. It is a motif of fundamental importance that first entered his oeuvre in 1960 and gained further force with the publication of the *Second Pandemonic Manifesto* in 1962. Cross forms recur throughout Baselitz's work, at times more overtly emphasized, often functioning as echoes of the classical iconography of the Crucifixion. In the present drawing, the cross appears like a solitary tree trunk with outstretched "arms" in a forest clearing, a sign that evokes the history of the Passion.

From the outset, drawing occupied an autonomous position within Baselitz's practice. It was never merely a sketch, preparatory study, or draft, even when certain motifs later reappeared in his paintings. Rather, drawing served as a clarifying medium in which the reflective artist translated thoughts and memories into imagery. In the early 1960s, this narrative language was marked by a deliberate ambiguity. The intentional obscuring that accompanies the drawn image allowed Baselitz to introduce a dreamlike dimension into his work. In our wash drawing in ink, executed with pen and brush, Baselitz not only suggests the spatial depth of a landscape dominated by a cross, but also articulates a stance of resistance toward the spirit of the age and its established visual conventions. He embarks on a path composed of narrative and interrelated signs, of lines repeatedly resumed, tentative beginnings, and renewed attempts to stabilize the landscape motif.

The pathos of the black line, the immediacy of the washes, and the elusive, uncanny figuration reveal visual traces of Baselitz's artistic influences, including Jean Fautrier, Georges Rouault, Antonin Artaud, and Philip Guston. In this drawing, the artist succeeds in expressing a youthful and inquisitive artistic vitality that forms the foundation of the figurative and combative style that remains characteristic of his work to this day.

MvL

