

The Museum of Modern Art

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MONUMENTAL PRINTS: GEORG BASELITZ AND ROLF ISELI
WILL GO ON VIEW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ON OCTOBER 13

More than 30 dramatically oversized prints by the contemporary European artists Georg Baselitz and Rolf Iseli will be presented in MONUMENTAL PRINTS: GEORG BASELITZ AND ROLF ISELI, opening at The Museum of Modern Art on October 13, 1983. Sixteen works by each artist in the concurrent exhibitions will reveal similarities in the ways these artists have expanded upon the possibilities offered by the print media to convey their ideas of the figure as an ambiguous, distorted or metamorphosed presence. Organized by Audrey Isselbacher, Assistant Curator in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, the linoleum cuts by Baselitz and drypoints by Iseli will remain on view in the Museum's ground floor galleries through January 3, 1984.

Baselitz and Iseli each turned to making prints in the mid-1970s as a way of achieving a further development of their imagery. Their works, created in media that have traditionally been used to produce small-scale or detailed prints, are of an unprecedented size: Baselitz's linoleum cuts average 90" x 60" while Iseli's drypoints average 60" x 35". The subjects of their works are generally transformed or barely recognizable figures, rendered in an expressionistic mode, and the impact of these images relies on both their exaggerated format and a painterly manipulation of the hand-inked areas. For both artists, printmaking holds a particular appeal because the process offers an artist the opportunity to document the evolution of individual compositions by printing each of the progressive states in several versions.

Georg Baselitz, a German artist who has always painted on a large scale, made his first oversized linoleum cut in 1977. The upside-down imagery that

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Baselitz had introduced earlier in his paintings as a way of restructuring an otherwise legible scene or object appears in his prints, and reflects the artist's continuing efforts to create a new form of abstraction based on recognizable imagery. "For an artist motivated by a desire to subtract figurative associations from an intrinsically realistic depiction, the reductive method of linoleum cut, that is, the opportunity to rework the block to transform the composition, offered the most alluring possibilities," comments Miss Isselbacher. Baselitz pulls only a few impressions of each state of a print to record the composition's development, and included among his works on view, which were all created between 1977 and 1981, will be two states of Nude in an Easy Chair (1977). Using heavy oil paints to print his linoleum cuts and then further embellishing the richly textured printed image with more hand-applied paint, Baselitz "ignores established boundaries between painting and printing," observes Miss Isselbacher.

Rolf Iseli, a Swiss-born artist who divides his time between Bern, Switzerland and the Burgundy region of France, began to create monumental dry-points in 1975. He chose a medium usually associated with small-scale drawing because the technique, in which the artist attacks a metal plate with a sharp tool, allowed him to have a direct manual confrontation with the plate. The imagery in Iseli's work consists of metamorphosed self-portraits with titles such as Mushroom Man and Feather Man and are created of vigorously incised lines that reflect the artist's rustic life in the French countryside. Among his works on view, which were all produced between 1975 and 1983, is Under Rocks (1982), a print inspired by the irregular outline of a rock that the artist had found and studied. Like Baselitz, Iseli does not issue standard editions, but instead reworks the plate many times, producing a number of successive states that record the composition's evolution. Crucial to each print's expressive qualities is the inking of the plate, a task that is performed by Iseli's master printer who "approaches the job not unlike a musician interpreting

another composer's score," notes Miss Isselbacher. Iseli's oeuvre is "printmaking on a monumental scale, due not only to the work's sheer size, but also to the tremendous ambition with which it is conceived," concludes Miss Isselbacher.

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