
ANSELM KIEFER

AM ANFANG

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

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"The more we know about the natural sciences on the one hand, for example, the less we know simultaneously on the other. The more knowledge accumulates the more it leads to a state of knowing even less, to an ever increasing body of ignorance. For this reason myths are vastly important. We cannot live without them. Anyone who thinks we should throw all our myths overboard in order to attain a better world is completely wrong. Because then the myths return once more through the back door - and the effect is destructive." Anselm Kiefer 2003

We are delighted to be able to announce a substantial individual exhibition devoted to new works by Anselm Kiefer, including seven large pictures, six sculptures and ten painted photographs.

Anselm Kiefer's art tracks down traces of memory in the history of humanity in many different shapes and forms, but nonetheless coherently. Just as variegated as the visual media in which Kiefer works are the sources on which he draws: antique myths, Nordic cultures, Jewish mysticism and the cabbala, cosmological outlines, alchemistic knowledge and modern technology.

In the late 1950s Joseph Beuys was the first to formulate to his fellow artists working in Germany the necessity of including German society's recent collective past in their works. In the 1970s Anselm Kiefer and Georg Baselitz were the most important representational artists to include memories and recollections in their work. This earned them official recognition in 1980 when they represented Germany at the Venice Biennale. For Kiefer 1980 was the year in which his international career took off at an extraordinarily rapid pace.

History and myths are still the basic elements in Anselm Kiefer's art. Whereas in the 1970s and 80s references to German history and mythology predominated, in recent years Jewish mysticism has taken over an important place in Kiefer's imagination and thoughts, alongside Greek and Mesopotamian mythology.

The more you occupy yourself with Kiefer's cosmos the more you get the feeling that you are involved in a »sort of labyrinth« (Daniel Arasse 2001) which continues to grow in a variety of different facets. It has now reached the stage that one and the same thought are included in very disparate works and themes. Whereby one and the same work contains an interwoven network of the most dissimilar philosophical associations. Kiefer will develop a thought over the space of decades, only then to reveal it again in different contexts. Over the years Kiefer's canvases, painted photographs, books and sculptures have increasingly become a place of categorical over-determination in the Freudian sense of the word.

»In the last three decades the breadth of Kiefer's work has not only become almost impossible for critics to keep a grasp on. It has continually and simultaneously gained in substance, depth and richness. Anselm Kiefer is more and more proving his value as one of the few impressively intelligent artists capable of applying all his intelligence to sensible artistic strategies and aesthetic qualities.« (Wieland Schmied 2003)

Despite all the many different facets and forms of Kiefer's art the appreciation of the function of art as an "ars memoriae", an art of memory, turns out to be a further constant in Kiefer's works. Their enigmatic qualities give viewers the impression that Kiefer has created them for one basic reason, to allay the memory of specific thoughts and arguments by reinventing them in the form of private allegories.

»I can only reflect my feelings, my thoughts and my intentions. I reflect them as accurately as possible and decide afterwards what the pictures are and who I am« (Anselm Kiefer, 1987)

That said Kiefer's works are always theatrical. The sheer size of the works, their impressive material-ness and the unexpected combination of materials within a work create a great effect on the viewers. In this respect lead plays a major role in the pictures, books and sculptures which Kiefer has created since the 1980s. True the material is not systematically present. Nonetheless it has become a mark of his work.

»Lead helps to constitute the meaning of a work by articulating it with its own material presence. The relation between the form and content of a work is, in this way, motivated by the material used« (Daniel Arasse, 2001)

A further stylistic leitmotif in the work of Anselm Kiefer can be found in the way he includes writing in his work. Names of places, gods, persons and complete lines from poems are included in the composition - mostly in orderly handwriting.

»The words are often written in as evocations, as names with a certain aura. This is why it is not about the names as such, but about the whole field

of references, the huge framework of references. The names in the picture you are talking about are written as if in humus, They rot away there like an organic substance, as dung for further growth. This is how art differs from science where nothing can be given without a basic reason.« (Anselm Kiefer, 2003)