

# Anselm Kiefer

## *Wer jetzt kein Haus hat*

1 September—22 October 2022

Thaddaeus Ropac  
Seoul Fort Hill  
2F, 122-1, Dokseodang-ro, Yongsan-gu, Seoul



Anselm Kiefer, *Wer jetzt kein Haus hat...*, 2016-2022.

Emulsion, oil, acrylic and shellac, lead, rope, sediment of an electrolysis and chalk on canvas. 190 x 330 cm (74.8 x 129.92 in).

Lord: it is time. The summer was immense.  
Lay your shadow on the sundials  
and let loose the wind in the fields.  
Bid the last fruits to be full;  
give them another two more southerly days,  
press them to ripeness, and chase  
the last sweetness into the heavy wine.  
Whoever has no house now will not build one anymore.  
Whoever is alone now will remain so for a long time,  
will stay up, read, write long letters,  
and wander the avenues, up and down,  
restlessly, while the leaves are blowing.

– Rainer Maria Rilke, ‘Herbsttag’ (‘Autumn Day’, 1902),  
translated from German by Galway Kinnell and Hannah  
Liebmann

The exhibition *Wer jetzt kein Haus hat* (Whoever has no house now) premieres a new series of works by internationally renowned German artist Anselm Kiefer paying homage to the Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke. Inspired by poems by Rilke dedicated to the autumn season, the paintings on view will feature dark, silhouetted trees and falling leaves in rich autumn browns leading into winter greys, displaying both the painter and the poet’s fascination with transience, decay and the passage of time. ‘The poem by Rilke has been in my memory for 60 years. I know many poems by heart, they are in me, and every now and then they emerge.’ The works in the exhibition draw on a group of photographs Anselm Kiefer took in Hyde Park, in London, on a sun-drenched autumn day. ‘I was truly shocked by the explosion of colours,’ he recalls, ‘by the

overwhelming natural scenery. The light and the colouring of the autumn leaves were of such intensity that I fetched the camera from the hotel and went to work.'

The new series is inspired by Rainer Maria Rilke's poems, notably 'Herbsttag' ('Autumn Day', 1902), 'Herbst' ('Autumn', 1906), and 'Ende des Herbstes' ('The End of Autumn', 1920). A pioneer of literary modernism, Rilke (1875–1926) is known for his intensely lyrical style, which is anchored in his deeply sensitive observations and impressions of the world, and imbued with personal symbolism. 'Whoever has no house now will not build one anymore', reads the first line of the final stanza of his poem 'Autumn Day', which Anselm Kiefer has handwritten across several of the paintings on view.

In poetry, Kiefer found a timeless language capable of giving voice to the complexities of human experience. As he explains, 'I think in pictures. Poems help me with this. They are like buoys in the sea. I swim to them, from one to the other. In between, without them, I am lost. They are the handholds where something masses together in the infinite expanse.' Rather than illustrating one with the other, the artist allows words and images to resonate through him, letting them merge and mutate on the canvas as though through an alchemical process. 'I'm in constant contact with these poets,' says Anselm Kiefer. 'I have a relationship with them, I call on them. I ask them for a critique when I've painted something. And so it's not so much that I quote them, but rather I live with them and talk to them.' This manifests materially in the richly layered colours and varnishes that make up the leaves protruding from the paintings on view in the exhibition. Their dense tactility suggests the accumulations of knowledge and history, year upon year, strata upon strata.

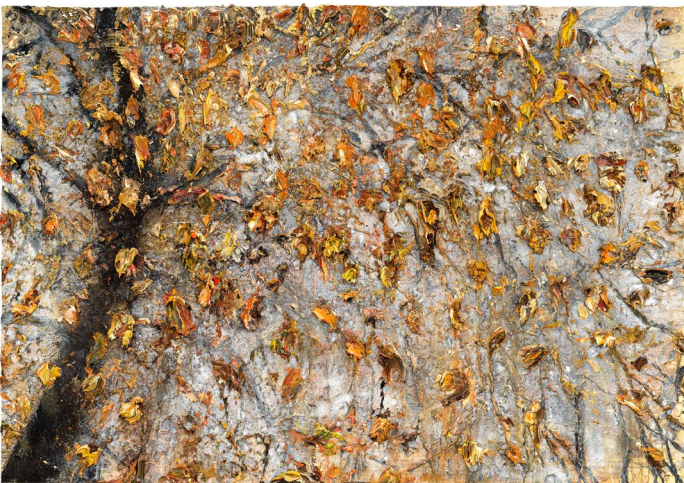


Anselm Kiefer, *Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr*, 2022  
118 laterite and straw bricks.  
83 x 288 x 183 cm (32.68 x 113.39 x 72.05 in).

Throughout the autumn and winter paintings, Anselm Kiefer has included lead and gold leaf, the two materials that mark the beginning and end of the ancient process of alchemy. Practised throughout the mediaeval world, this ancient science sought to transform the basest of metals into the most precious and pure. Lead is a recurring element throughout Anselm Kiefer's work, one which he describes as 'the only material heavy enough to carry the weight of human history.' Juxtaposed with gold, the two metals become a metaphor for spiritual enlightenment, transcendence and rebirth, one that finds echo in the cycle of the passing of the seasons.

At the heart of the study of alchemy was a belief that all different substances and life forms are made of the same four essential elements, forging a profound connection between the human and natural worlds which is palpable in the exhibition and throughout Rilke's poetry. As summer turns into autumn and autumn into winter in his verses, the poet weaves together the spiritual world, the natural and the human. 'Whoever is alone now will remain so for a long time, / will stay up, read, write long letters, / and wander the avenues, up and down, / restlessly, while the leaves are blowing', ends the poem which lends the exhibition its name.

At the centre of the exhibition, a mud-brick installation will constitute a poignant reminder of the scarceness of shelter, connecting the man-made to the cycles of the natural world. As a child growing up in post-war Germany, Anselm Kiefer played among the ruins of the houses that had been destroyed by bombardments. Bricks have become a recurring theme in his practice as a result, symbolising at once the propensity for destruction and



Anselm Kiefer, *Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr*, 2022  
Emulsion, oil, acrylic, shellac, lead and rope on canvas.  
190 x 280 cm (74.8 x 110.24 in).

the potential for reconstruction and rebirth that are at the centre of human history.

The artist establishes a dialogue between nature and the human condition by placing a brick house at the centre of his paintings of trees and falling leaves. From the past or the present, half-built or half-destroyed, the installation offers an opportunity to identify and think through the personal, as well as the more universal implications of the passage of time and the changing of the seasons. Among the darkness and decay, the same sense of hope seems to emerge from the paintings as from Rilke's poems: 'But there is One who holds this falling / Infinitely softly in His hands.'

### About the artist

Anselm Kiefer's ongoing preoccupation with cultural memory, identity and history lends his works their multi-layered subject matter, fuelled by a variety of historical, mythological and literary sources. These include references to Greek and Germanic mythology, alchemy, and Christian symbolism, as well as the writings of celebrated mediaeval lyricist Walther von der Vogelweide, Romanian-born poet Paul Celan, French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire, Russian Futurist Velimir Khlebnikov, and Austrian post-war poet Ingeborg Bachmann, among others.

Over the past forty years, Kiefer's practice has developed through the accumulation, mingling and reworking of themes, motifs and constellations which recur across diverse media. The language of material plays an essential role in his works, which often have a sedimentary geological texture. Highly symbolic connections emerge from lead, concrete, dirt, dried plants, glass, barbed wire and the inclusion of found objects such as books, scythes and model ships.

While many of his works can be interpreted in the context of fraught German identity in the post-war era, Kiefer's preoccupation with myth and memorialisation encompasses the full sweep of human history. This is expressed not only thematically, but also on the level of form itself, through his treatment of materials and use of texture. Many of his canvases and sculptures are intentionally left outside to become weathered by the elements: 'I need nature, the changing weather, the heat and the cold. Sometimes I leave my paintings out in the rain, I throw acid, earth or water over them.'

The preservation of knowledge is an important theme for Kiefer, whose extensive study of history and literature informs his practice. This is reflected in his numerous artist's books and book sculptures, which represent important repositories of learning, religion and culture. He inscribes

lines of poetry, quotations and names in his distinctive handwriting on works that pay tribute to predecessors who have shaped our knowledge and understanding of the world.

Anselm Kiefer was born in 1945 in Donaueschingen, Germany. In 1992, he moved to France, where he lives and works between Paris and Barjac near Avignon. The artist studied law, literature and linguistics before attending the Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe. He was selected for the West German Pavilion at the 39th Venice Biennale in 1980 and his works have since been shown in prominent solo exhibitions internationally, including at the Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (1984); Art Institute of Chicago (1987); Nationalgalerie, Berlin (1991); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1998); Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2001); Guggenheim Bilbao (2007); Royal Academy of Arts, London (2014); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015); Bibliothèque National de France (2015); Albertina, Vienna (2016); State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (2017); Rodin Museum, Paris (2017); Met Breuer, New York (2018); and Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo (2019).

Kiefer was presented the Praemium Imperiale Award by Japan in 1999, and in 2008 he received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade. In 2007 he was the first artist since Georges Braque to have a permanent installation commissioned for the Louvre in Paris, and in 2018 his site-specific sculpture *Uraeus* was exhibited in front of the Rockefeller Center, New York.

French President Emmanuel Macron commissioned Anselm Kiefer to create a permanent installation for the Panthéon in Paris in 2020. An exhibition of monumental works by the artist, dedicated to Paul Celan, was on view at the Grand Palais Éphémère in Paris in 2021–22. His works are currently on view at the Palazzo Ducale in Venice until 29 October 2022.



Anselm Kiefer, 2014. Photo: Charles Duprat.

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