

Royal Academy of Arts

# Anselm Kiefer

Courtyard,  
Vestibule & 1



**Do not remove from gallery**

# Audio points for 1



Main commentary



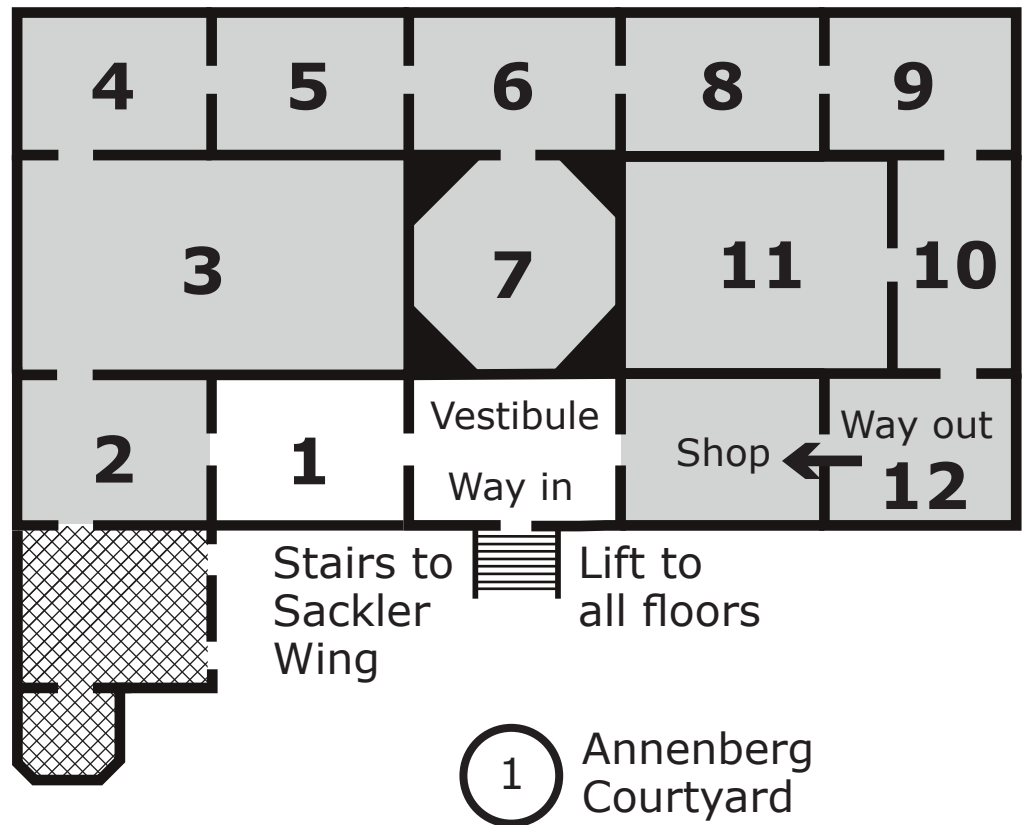
Descriptive commentary



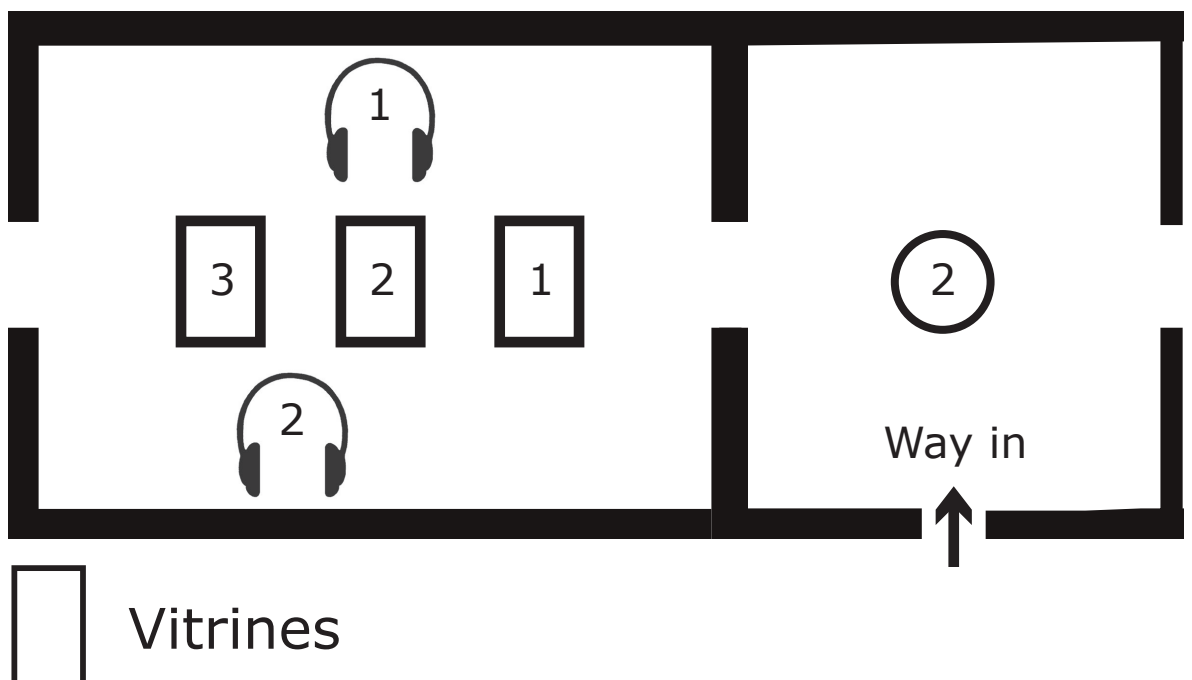
Heroic Symbol I (cat. 5)



The Adige (cat 23)



You are in  
vestibule, gallery 1



# **Anselm Kiefer**

Main Galleries, Burlington House

27 September - 14 December 2014

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22, 23, 24

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W H I T E   C U B E

Born into a Catholic family in the Black Forest region of Germany in 1945, at the end of the Second World War, Kiefer always knew that he wanted to be an artist.

Following school, he expanded his cultural education, which was wide-ranging and largely self-taught, and briefly studied law at the University of Freiburg before attending the Academy of Art in Karlsruhe.

Kiefer has taken inspiration from poets, philosophers, scientists and writers throughout his life.

Although he acknowledges the influence of such artists as Vincent van Gogh, Joseph Beuys, Andy Warhol and Caspar David Friedrich, Kiefer has created his own, distinctive iconography in which each element is loaded with symbolism and meaning.

Kiefer takes a cyclical view of time and history rather than a linear and progressive one and, as a consequence, a handful of overarching themes appear regularly in his work, from the very early days right up to the present.

He seeks to understand our purpose here on Earth, our relationship with the celestial, the spiritual, and the weight of human history.

His subjects might appear historical in their reference, but they are in essence of our time – as much about the world today as about the events of the past.

Through his work, Kiefer struggles to make sense of our passage through life.

His thirst for knowledge and understanding provokes the viewer to consider these bigger questions with him, making his work challenging and occasionally confrontational.

# List of works

In the Annenberg  
Courtyard

**1**

**Velimir Khlebnikov:  
Fates of Nations: The  
New Theory of War  
Time, Dimension of the  
World, Battles at Sea  
Occur Every 317 Years  
or Multiples Thereof,  
Namely 317 x 1, 2, 3,4,  
5, 6 . . . . .**

(Velimir Chlebnikow:  
Schicksale der Völker:  
die neue Lehre vom  
Krieg Zeit, Maß der Welt,  
Seeschlachten ereignen sich  
alle 317 Jahre oder deren  
Vielfachen, also  $317 \times 1, 2,$   
 $3, 4, 5, 6 \dots \dots \dots$ )

2011–2014

Two glass vitrines with steel, clay, lead and photographs  
Private collection



# In the Vestibule

**2**

## **Language of the Birds** (Die Sprache der Vögel)

2013

Installation with lead, metal, wood, plaster and gouache-painted photographs on cardboard

Private collection

# 1

In this first gallery we consider Kiefer's early work of the late 1960s and 1970s, savouring the wide range of his media, from books to delicate works on paper and finally to painting.

Books have been central to his practice since 1968. He considers them works in their own right but also as intimate visual diaries in which his thoughts collide and become reference points for later works. In these books he seeks to "re-create a memory".

It is the very re-enactment of memory that first brought Kiefer to the attention of a broader public.

Born at the very end of the war, he found that his history lessons at school only touched lightly on the Third Reich.

This collective absence of memory fascinated him and led him to create his “provocation” in the painting series ‘Heroic Symbols’ and the ‘Occupations’ books, in which he used his own body, representing Everyman, dressed in his father’s German army uniform, to confront the viewer with the realities of our histories.

The fact that the Nazi salute and the wearing of Nazi clothing had been banned in Germany since 1945 served to heighten the outcry, with many wrongly confusing Kiefer’s critical consideration of the period with sympathy for the regime.

At the heart of Kiefer’s motivation lay an attempt to reclaim the authority and integrity of the artist following the Third Reich’s exploitation of and associations with art, which had made it almost impossible for any German to become an artist, particularly given the Nazis’ promotion of Hitler as a fine artist.

The impact of this time is further explored in Kiefer's watercolours, in which analogies are drawn with Norse mythology, early German history and the struggles of modern literature and poetry.

In these works we first encounter Kiefer's forests and his barren, ploughed landscapes. To Kiefer, the forest is a place of refuge but also the site of unsettling tales and great battles.

These landscapes nod to the Nazi cult of the German land, of 'Blut und Boden' (Blood and Soil) and the belief that Aryans led a healthy, rural life.

## List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

**8**

### **Elisabeth on Corfu**

(Elisabeth auf Korfu)

1976

Gouache and graphite pencil on paper

Private collection

**9**

### **Odin – Yggdrasil**

1976

Graphite pencil on paper

Private collection

**10**

### **Ragnarök, 1976**

Graphite pencil on paper

Private collection

**20**

## **Herzeleide**

1979

Watercolour, gouache and graphite on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1995 (1995.14.25)

**19**

## **German Lineages of Salvation**

(Deutsche Heilslinie)

1975

Watercolour, gouache and ballpoint pen on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Purchase, Denise and Andrew Saul Fund, 1995

(1995.14.19)

# 24

## **Man Lying with Branch**

(Liegender Mann mit Zweig)

1971

Watercolour, gouache and graphite pencil on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Gift of Cynthia Hazan Polsky, in memory of her father,  
Joseph H. Hazen, 2000 (2000.96.1)

# 14

## **Winter Landscape**

(Winterlandschaft)

1970

Watercolour, gouache and graphite pencil on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Denise and Andrew Saul Fund, 1995 (1995.14.5)

# 17

## **From Oscar Wilde**

(Von Oskar Wilde)

1974

Watercolour and gouache on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Gift of Cynthia Hazen Polsky, in memory of her father,  
Joseph H. Hazen, 2000 (2000.96.3)

# 16

## **Virginia Woolf**

c. 1975

Watercolour, gouache and graphite pencil on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1995  
(1995.14.20ab)



**23**



**The Adige**  
(Die Etsch)

c. 1970s

Watercolour, gouache and ink on paper

Hall Collection

**15**

**Ice and Blood**  
(Eis und Blut)

1971

Watercolour on paper

Private collection, Germany

**21**

**Heliogabalus**  
(Heliogabal)

1974/1975

Watercolour, gouache and ink on paper

Hall Collection

**22**

**My Father Pledged Me  
a Sword**

(Ein Schwert verhieß mir  
der Vater)

1974–1975

Watercolour, gouache and ballpoint pen on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1995 (1995.14.14)

**18**

**Sick Art**

(Kranke Kunst)

1974

Watercolour, gouache and ballpoint pen on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1995 (1995.14.10)

**3**

## **Man in the Forest**

(Mann im Wald)

1971

Acrylic on muslin

The Doris and Donald Fisher Collection

**4**

## **Head in the Forest, Head in the Clouds**

(Kopf im Wald, Kopf in den  
Wolken)

1971

Oil and fabric collage on two canvas panels

The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica

**7**

## **Heroic Symbol V**

(Heroisches Sinnbild V)

1970

Oil on canvas

Collection Würth

**5**

## **Heroic Symbol I**

(Heroisches Sinnbild I)

1969–1970

Oil and charcoal on linen

Collection Würth



**6**

## **Heroic Symbol II**

(Heroisches Sinnbild II)

1970

Oil on canvas

Collection Würth

**13**

**Ways of Worldly Wisdom**  
(Wege der Weltweisheit)

1977

Graphite pencil on paper

Private collection

**12**

**Ways**  
(Wege)

1976

Graphite pencil on paper

Private collection

## **Vitrine 1:**

**26-27, 30, 32-35,  
79-96, 109-122**

**Selection of artist's books**  
dating from 1969–1992

Mixed media

Private collection

## **Vitrine 2:**

**25**

**For Jean Genet**

**(Für Jean Genet)**

**1969**

Illustrated 24-page book with bound watercolour on paper, graphite,  
original photographs, hair and canvas strips on cardboard  
Hall Collection

**26-27, 30, 32-35,  
79-96, 109-122**

**Selection of artist's books**

**dating from 1969–1992**

Mixed media

Private collection

## **Vitrine 3:**

# **28**

## **The Burning of the Rural District of Buchen**

(Ausbrennen des  
Landkreises Buchen)

1974

Illustrated 210-page book with bound original  
photographs, ferric oxide and linseed oil on woodchip  
paper

Hall Collection



**31**

**The Burning of the Rural  
District of Buchen IV**

(Ausbrennen des  
Landkreises Buchen IV),  
1975

Illustrated 56-page linen-bound book with ferrous oxide  
and linseed oil on fragments of former paintings (oil on  
burlap)

Private collection

# 29

## **The Face of the German People, Coal for 2,000 Years**

(Das deutsche Volksgesicht,  
Kohle für 2000 Jahre)

1974

Illustrated 184-page book with bound original  
photographs, emulsion, coal, linseed oil and ferric oxide  
on woodchip paper

Hall Collection

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Thank you.

Molly Bretton, Access Officer



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# Anselm Kiefer

2



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# Audio points for 2



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



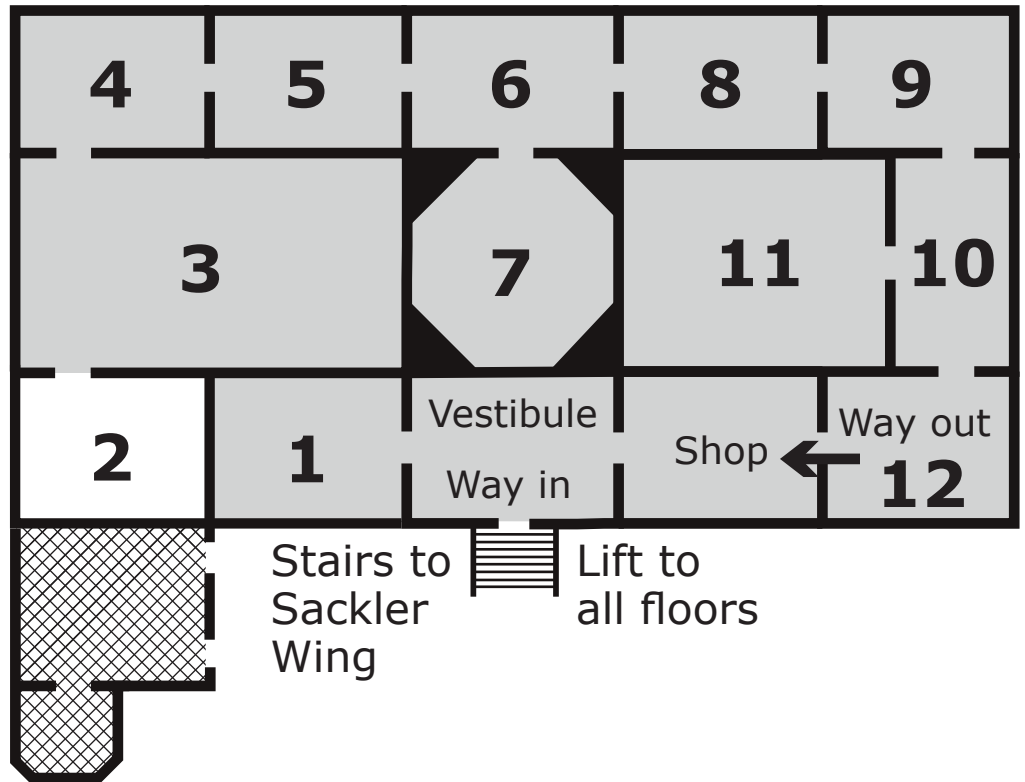
51 Father, Son, Holy Ghost (cat. 38)



The Painter's Studio (cat. 37)



Parsifal I (cat. 40.1)



You are in 2



# **Anselm Kiefer**

Main Galleries, Burlington House

27 September - 14 December 2014

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W H I T E   C U B E

# 2

The paintings from the 'Attic' series, three of which are shown in this gallery, were made between 1971 and 1973 and are so called because the scenes they depict are set within Kiefer's studio of the time: the attic of a former schoolhouse at Hornbach in the German district of Buchen.

Kiefer has likened his studios to laboratories in which he carries out research aimed at making discoveries about beginnings, about the origins of art.

Major cycles of work can be identified clearly with the locations in which he has "protected" space to think and create: from the former schoolhouse at Hornbach and the old brick factory at Höpfingen; to La Ribotte, the 75-acre site at Barjac in the South of France where he has created fifty separate buildings, towers and excavated chambers;



to the Marais in Paris;  
and most recently to a vast warehouse,  
formerly occupied by the department store  
La Samaritaine, on the outskirts of the French  
capital.

The attic at Hornbach became the stage  
on which Kiefer re-created mythological,  
religious and historical events with a view to  
understanding and resolving their truths.

'Nothung', referring to the sword in the  
Nibelung myths and Richard Wagner's 'Ring'  
cycle, speaks of defeat but also challenges  
the appropriation of Norse mythology by the  
Nazis as justification for their actions.

'Parsifal', also the title of Wagner's last  
completed opera, references a thirteenth-  
century romantic legend in which the  
eponymous hero's father dies in battle,  
leaving his mother, Herzeleide ('Suffering  
Heart'), determined that her son shall not  
suffer the same fate.

Parsifal discovers the world of arms and combat for himself and goes in search of the Holy Grail. His success is made possible by his retrieval of the Holy Spear that wounded Christ on the cross and by his defeat of the evil knight Ither, whose name appears beside his bloodied, broken sword.

In 'Father, Son, Holy Ghost' Kiefer draws us into his considerations regarding religion and the Holy Trinity, as represented by the three chairs surmounted with heavenly flames that cleanse and purify.

For Kiefer, fire is a powerful symbol that mediates between Heaven and Earth, and as representatives of creation and destruction the flames also lick at the staircase that ascends to the painter's studio, the furnace of creativity, as depicted in the photographs.

## List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

# 39

## Nothing

1973

Charcoal and oil on burlap with inserted charcoal drawing on cardboard

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

# 40.1 - 40.3

## Parsifal I, II, III

1973

Oil and blood on paper on canvas

Tate. Purchased 1982



**38**



51



# **Father, Son, Holy Ghost** (Vater, Sohn, Heiliger Geist) 1973

Oil, charcoal and synthetic resin on burlap

Collection Sanders, Amsterdam, on permanent loan to  
Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

**37**



# **The Painter's Studio** (Des Malers Atelier) 1980

Chalk, graphite pencil, acrylic and oil on photograph  
(1971)

Graphische Sammlung Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

# 36

## **The Painter's Studio**

(Des Malers Atelier)

1980–1981

Oil, acrylic and emulsion on photograph

Courtesy Museum Weserburg Bremen, permanent loan

Ströher Collection

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# Anselm Kiefer

3



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# Audio points for 3



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Varus (cat. 43)



Ways of Worldly Wisdom: The Battle of Hermann (cat. 41)



Iconoclastic Controversy (cat. 42)

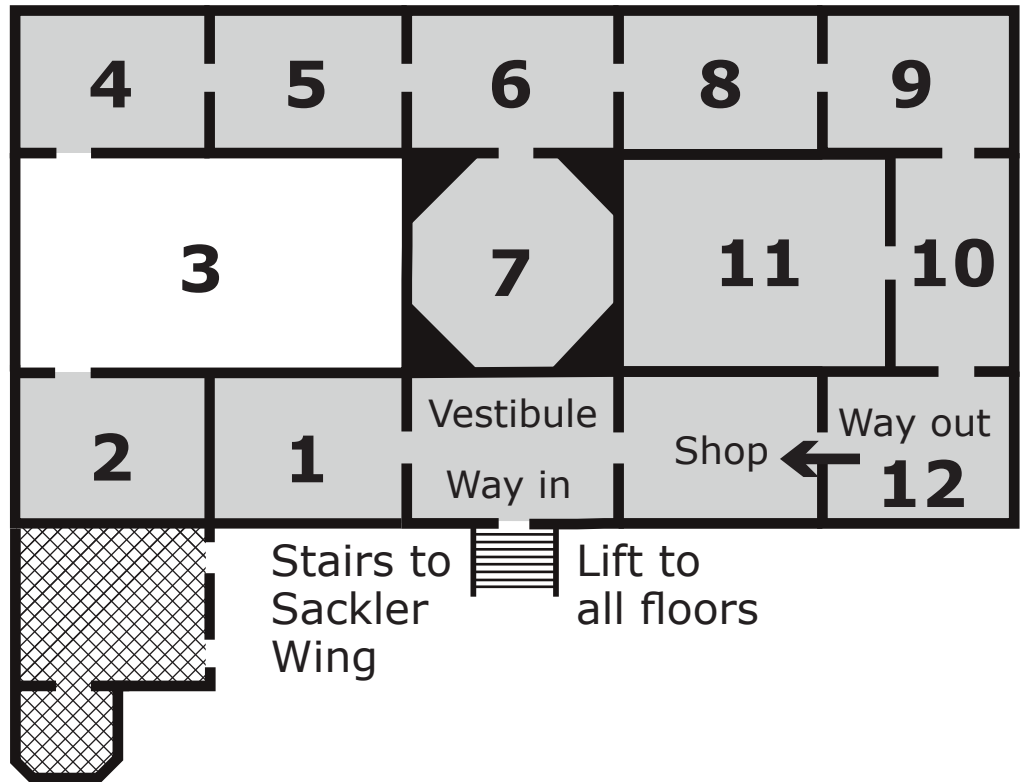


Interior (cat. 46)



Margarethe (cat. 47)





You are in 3



# **Anselm Kiefer**

Main Galleries, Burlington House

27 September - 14 December 2014

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Deathfugue

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W H I T E   C U B E

# 3

The late 1970s and 1980s saw Kiefer's paintings move out of the studio and into the landscape.

The significance of the forest continues, here as the birthplace of German nationalism in 'Varus' and 'Ways of Worldly Wisdom', in which Arminius (also known as Hermann) successfully resisted the Romans, led by Varus, in AD 9. The Nazis employed Arminius as a prototype for their cult of heroes of the German people.

In these works, Kiefer lists and portrays some of the individuals who have reflected on this battle throughout history, linking them to each other with spidery lines connecting past and present, placing at their centre the fire that on this occasion perhaps represents the oversight and judgement of a spiritual being, or potentially its alchemical, transformative power.

The almost architectural structure of 'Ways of Worldly Wisdom', one of Kiefer's first large-scale woodcuts, looks towards the inspiration he took at this time from the buildings of the Third Reich.

Albert Speer, known as Hitler's architect, and Wilhelm Kreis were commissioned by the Nazis to design buildings to exalt the ideology of National Socialism, Hitler himself ordering that all such buildings should be made from stone so as to make beautiful ruins.

In 'To the Unknown Painter' and other works from this series, Kiefer explores the cultural significance of these neoclassical buildings which appropriate the values of ancient civilisations.

The artist is represented by the solitary palette standing defiantly at the centre of the work, and ironically referencing the tomb of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

For many years, Kiefer has moved between the worlds of poetry and painting. He has spoken of poems as being “like buoys in the sea. I swim to them, from one to the next: without them, I am lost.”

In the pair of paintings ‘Margarethe’ and ‘Sulamith’, Kiefer responds to Paul Celan’s poem ‘Deathfugue’, written shortly after Celan (1920–1970) was liberated from a Nazi labour camp.

Shulamith, the dark haired beauty, whose ghostly presence is hinted at in this subterranean mausoleum, stands alongside Margarethe, with her long blonde hair, in this case represented by the golden straw of the German land, which Kiefer here applies to a painting for the first time.

# Deathfugue

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at evening  
we drink it at midday and morning we drink it  
at night

we drink and we drink

we shovel a grave in the air where you won't  
lie too cramped

A man lives in the house he plays with his  
vipers he writes

he writes when it grows dark to Deutschland  
your golden hair Margareta

he writes it and steps out of doors and the  
stars are all sparkling he whistles his hounds  
to stay close

he whistles his Jews into rows has them  
shovel a grave in the ground

he commands us play up for the dance.

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night  
we drink you at morning and midday we  
drink you at evening

we drink and we drink

A man lives in the house he plays with his  
vipers he writes

he writes when it grows dark to Deutschland  
your golden hair Margareta

Your ashen hair Shulamith we shovel a grave  
inn the air where you won't lie too cramped

He shouts dig this earth deeper you lot there  
you others sing up and play

he grabs for the rod in his belt he swings it  
his eyes are so blue

stick your spades deeper you lot there you  
others play on for the dancing

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night  
we drink you at midday and morning we  
drink you at evening

we drink and we drink

a man lives in the house your goldenes Haar  
Margareta

your aschenes Haar Shulamith he plays with  
his vipers

He shouts play death more sweetly this  
Death is a master from Deutschland

he shouts scrape your strings darker you'll  
rise up as smoke to the sky

you'll then have a grave in the clouds where  
you won't lie too cramped

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night

We drink you at midday Death is a master  
aus Deutschland

we drink you at evening and morning we  
drink and we drink



this Death is ein Meister aus Deutschland his  
eye it is blue

he shoots you with shot made of lead shoots  
you level and true

a man lives in the house your goldenes Haar  
Margarete

he looses his hounds on us grants us a grave  
in the air

he plays with his vipers and daydreams der  
Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland

dein goldenes Haar Margarete

dein aschenes Haar Sulamith

Paul Celan, 'Mohn und Gedächtnis' ©1952, Deutsche  
Verlags-Anstalt, Munich, part of the Random House  
publishing group GmbH

'Deathfugue' from 'Selected Poems and Prose of Paul  
Celan' by Paul Celan, translated by John Felstiner  
Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

## List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

**48**

### **Sulamith**

1983

Oil, acrylic, woodcut, emulsion and straw on canvas

The Doris and Donald Fisher Collection

**47**

### **Margarethe**

1981

Oil, acrylic, emulsion and straw on canvas

The Doris and Donald Fisher Collection



**46**

### **Interior (Innenraum)**

1981

Oil, acrylic and paper on canvas

Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam



# 45

## **To the Unknown Painter** (Dem unbekannten Maler)

1983

Oil, acrylic, emulsion, aquatec latex, straw and shellac  
on canvas

MKM Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst,  
Duisburg, Ströher Collection

# 44

## **The Stairs** (Die Treppe)

1982–1983

Emulsion, shellac, straw and scorch marks on  
photographs (on document paper) on canvas

MKM Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst,  
Duisburg, Ströher Collection

# 49

## **Ash Flower**

(Aschenblume)

1983–1997

Oil, emulsion, acrylic paint, clay, ash, earth and dried sunflower on canvas

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.

Gift of The Burnett Foundation in honour of Michael Auping

# 42



## **Iconoclastic Controversy**

(Bilder-Streit)

1980

Oil, emulsion, shellac and sand on photograph, mounted on canvas, with woodcut

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

# 41



## **Ways of Worldly Wisdom: The Battle of Hermann**

(Wege der Weltweisheit: die  
Hermannsschlacht)

1980

Ink, acrylic paint and collage on paper

Martijn and Jeannette Sanders, Amsterdam

# 43



## **Varus**

1976

Oil on canvas

Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

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# Anselm Kiefer

4



**Do not remove from gallery**

# Audio points for 4



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



11



52 The Orders of the Night (cat. 55)



12

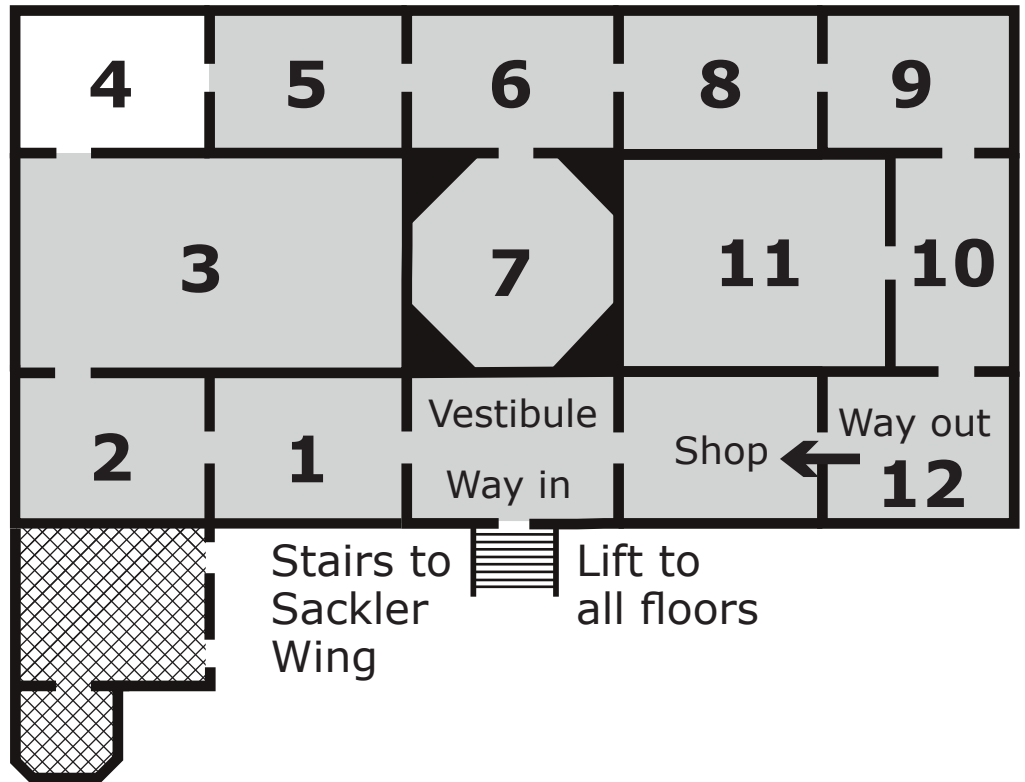
Operation Sea Lion (cat. 50)



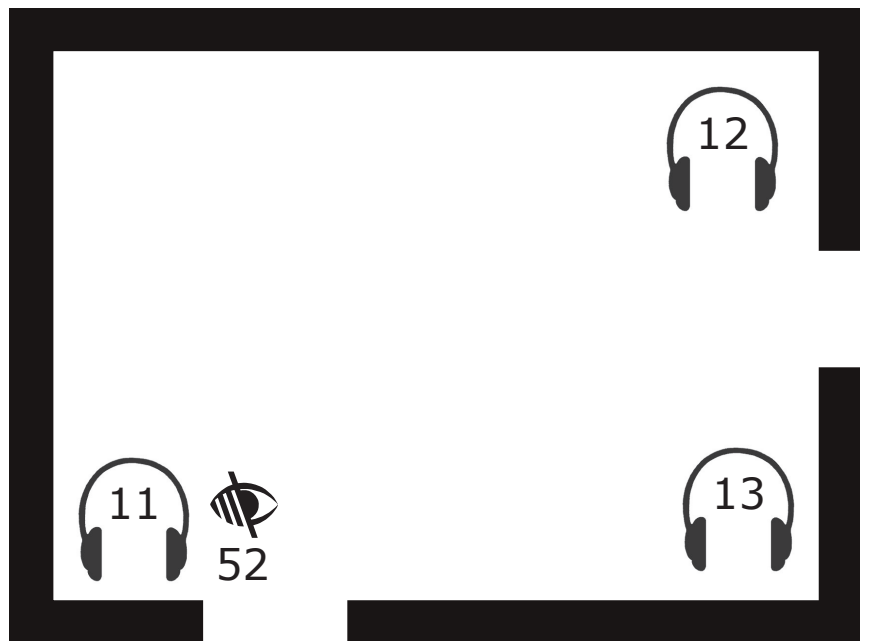
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Resumptio (cat. 52)





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# **Anselm Kiefer**

Main Galleries, Burlington House

27 September - 14 December 2014

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W H I T E   C U B E

# 4

In this gallery we consider a fundamental concern within much of Kiefer's work: the link between the celestial and the earthly, between the divine and the human, between God and Man.

In Kiefer's cosmology, the universe is an immense alchemical oven in which spirit and matter find themselves in a continuous process of creation and destruction.

In 'The Orders of the Night' Kiefer himself lies beneath the sunflowers. Sunflowers follow the sun, embodying the connection between the earthly and the celestial. They are equally emblematic of the cycle of birth-death-rebirth, and their seeds appear frequently in Kiefer's works.

He has said: “When I look at ripe, heavy sunflowers, bending to the ground with blackened seeds ... I see the firmament and the stars”, reflecting the writings of the sixteenth-century English physician Robert Fludd, who believed that for every plant on Earth there was a corresponding star, linking microcosm and macrocosm.

In ‘Operation Sea Lion’ the celestial plane – on which the three chairs of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost are placed – sits in judgement of the earthly scene below.

The legends surrounding this planned but unexecuted naval attack on Britain by the decimated German navy are belittled by its enactment with toy boats in a bath.

The bath itself is a reference to the zinc baths issued to all German households by the Third Reich. Kiefer encountered one of these baths in the attic of his studio at Hornbach many years later, and it went on to feature repeatedly in his paintings and photographs.

## List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

**55**



52



11

# **The Orders of the Night** (Die Orden der Nacht)

1996

Emulsion, acrylic and shellac on canvas

Seattle Art Museum.

Gift of Mr and Mrs Richard C. Hedreen

**54**

# **Seraphim**

1984

Oil, emulsion, shellac and silkscreen ink on canvas

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Collection of Vicki and Kent Logan, fractional and  
promised gift to the San Francisco Museum of  
Modern Art

**50**



## **Operation Sea Lion**

(Unternehmen Seelöwe)

1975

Oil on canvas

Collection of Irma and Norman Braman, Miami Beach,  
Florida

**51**

## **Painting of the Scorched Earth**

(Malerei der verbrannten  
Erde)

1974

Oil on burlap

Private collection

# 52

## Resumptio

1974

Oil, emulsion and shellac on burlap

Private collection



# 53

## Palette on a Rope (Palette am Seil)

1977

Oil, acrylic, emulsion and shellac on canvas

Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich

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Royal Academy of Arts

# Anselm Kiefer

5



**Do not remove from gallery**

# Audio points for 5



Main commentary



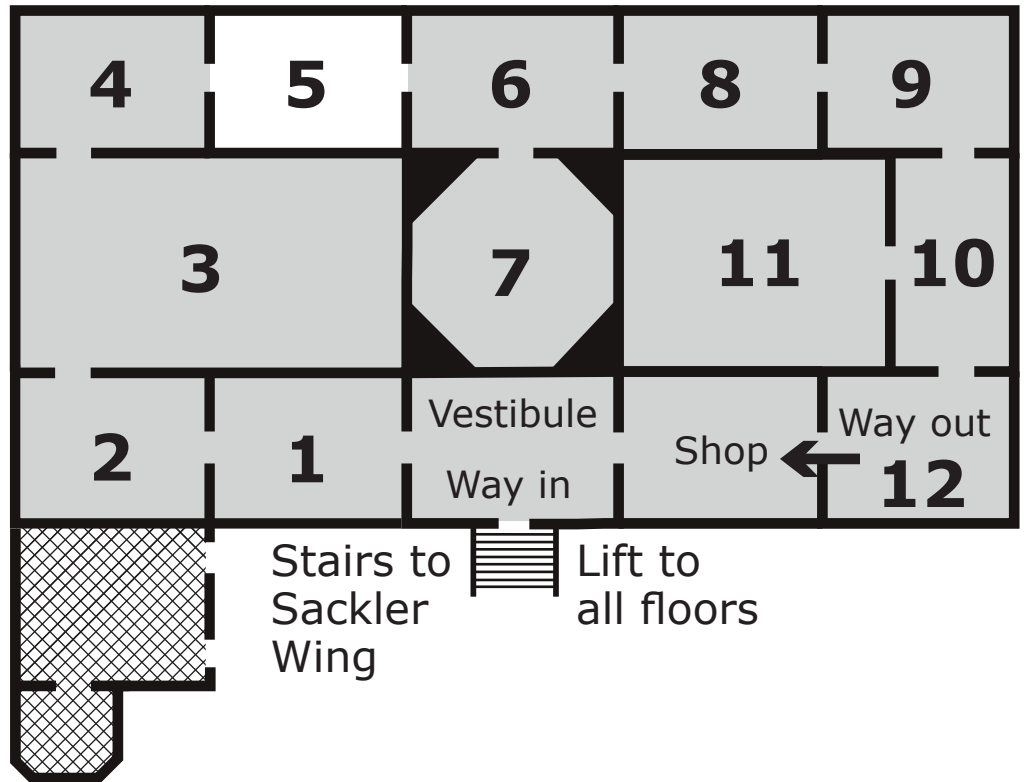
Descriptive commentary



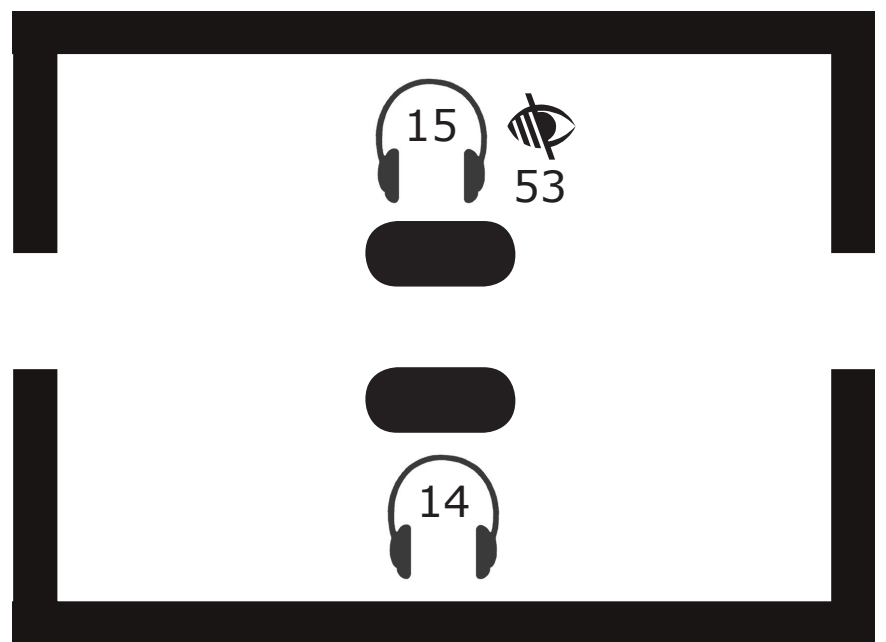
For Ingeborg Bachmann: The Sand from the Urns (cat. 56)



53 Osiris and Isis (cat. 57)



You are in 5



 Seating

# **Anselm Kiefer**

Main Galleries, Burlington House

27 September - 14 December 2014

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List of works: 56, 57

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# 5

Kiefer has long been interested in the civilisation of Mesopotamia, the Fertile Crescent.

He was particularly fascinated by cuneiform writing on clay tablets made from the hand-pressed mud of the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates.

He noted that the same material was used to make bricks, leading him to perceive “a secret connection between writing and building” and to wonder whether bricks, like tablets, could hold memories of people, of events, of time.

Being made of clay, bricks suggest the transience of man and that, as the Bible reminds us, we too are made of clay and will one day turn to dust.

Furthermore, the artist's memories from Donaueschingen, where he played among the bricks and rubble of the bomb-damaged buildings that surrounded his childhood home, remain a strong influence on his work.

Kiefer has also been inspired by the buildings that he saw on his travels in Central and South America, Egypt, Israel, China and India.

Travelling along the Silk Route he encountered at regular intervals the remains of brick kilns, constructed in the time of Chairman Mao, who had ordered the roads to be paved.

The traces of these kilns, with their resemblance to archaeological digs, left a deep impression on Kiefer.

In the painting dedicated to the Austrian poet Ingeborg Bachmann (1926–1973) – the ill-fated lover of Paul Celan and regarded by Kiefer as the greatest poet of the second half of the twentieth century – he unites the two writers using the title of Celan's book of poems 'The Sand from the Urns'.

The story of 'Osiris and Isis' is one of death and resurrection.

Osiris, god of the underworld, was murdered by his brother Set, who dispersed the dismembered body across the land. Osiris' grieving widow, Isis, searched for his remains, literally "re-membering" and resurrecting him.

Pyramids have long stood as a meeting point between Heaven and Earth, but the presence in this work of a fragmented television circuit board alludes to the connection between the ancient and modern worlds.

## List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

**57**



**53**



**15**

# **Osiris and Isis**

**(Osiris und Isis)**

**1985–1987**

Oil and acrylic emulsion with additional three-dimensional media

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Purchased through a gift from Jean Stein by exchange, the Mrs Paul L. Wattis Fund, and the Doris and Donald Fisher Fund



# 56



## **For Ingeborg Bachmann: The Sand from the Urns** (Für Ingeborg Bachmann: der Sand aus den Urnen)

1998–2009

Acrylic, oil, shellac and sand on canvas

Private collection, courtesy White Cube

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# Anselm Kiefer

6 & 7



**Do not remove from gallery**

# Audio points for 6 & 7



Main commentary



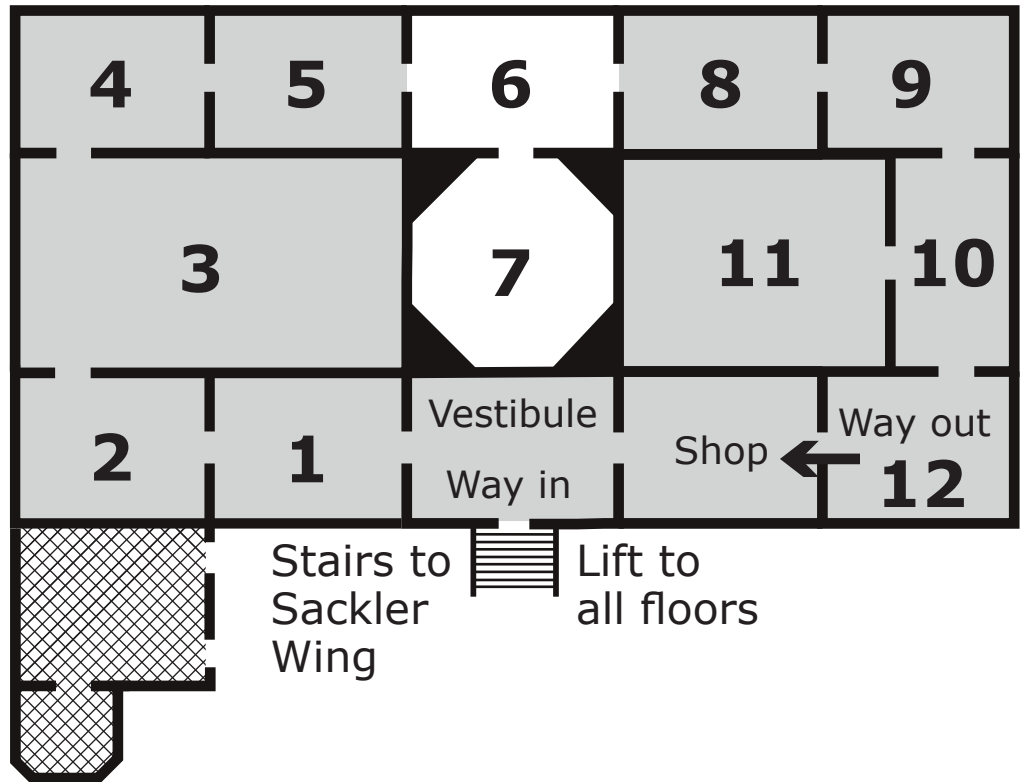
Descriptive commentary



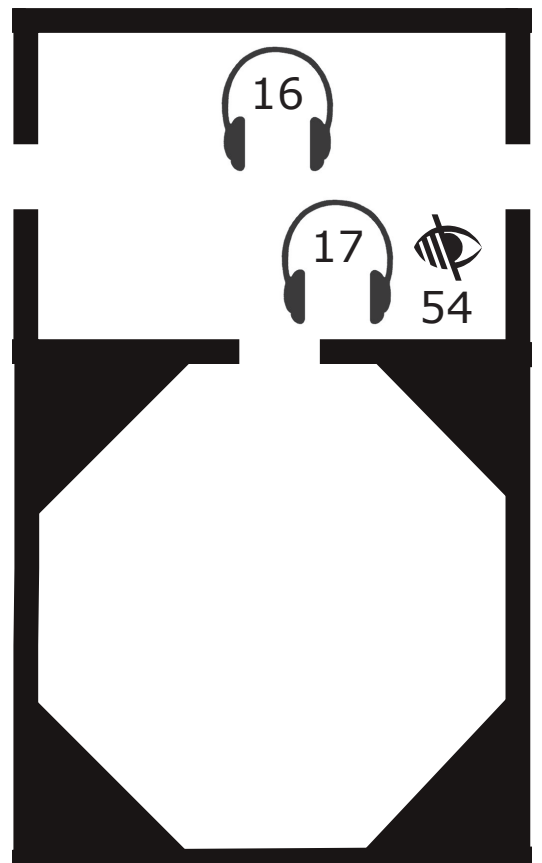
Untitled (cat. 78)



54 Ages of the World (cat. 60)



You are in 6 & 7



# **Anselm Kiefer**

Main Galleries, Burlington House

27 September - 14 December 2014

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Label for cat. 60

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# 6

In the 1980s the vitrine, which has long been the subject of art-historical discourse, began to play a more significant role in Kiefer's work.

The vitrine in this gallery acts as the container of a painting, hermetically sealed.

The scene within is a familiar one in Kiefer's work: a dense wooded forest, with thorns from Morocco, and structures of moulded concrete that echo the towers in his sculpture 'Jericho', which stood in the Royal Academy's Annenberg Courtyard in 2007.

Kiefer worked on a series of diptych and triptych vitrine paintings of forests in 2009, many on the theme of the Karfunkelfee, a supernatural figure who appears in a poem by Ingeborg Bachmann.

Kiefer's glass vitrines are both sculpture containers and picture frames.

The installation in the Annenberg Courtyard, 'Velimir Khlebnikov: Fates of Nations: The New Theory of War', comprises his first external vitrines.

The dramatic and sublime work that he has constructed, with its suspended ships and text, relates to his interest in the Russian Futurist poet Velimir Khlebnikov (1885–1922), who believed that great battles at sea occur in a cycle of 317 years, or in multiples of that number.

# 78

## Untitled

### 2006–2008

Lead, concrete, roses, brambles, acrylic, oil, emulsion, ash and shellac on canvas in steel-and-glass frame

Miel de Botton, London





# **Ex cat**

## **Hortus Conclusus**

2007–2014

Collage of woodcuts on canvas with acrylic and shellac  
Private collection

**7**

## **Ages of the World**

### **(Die Erdzeitalter)**

2014

Installation with mixed media and gouache-painted  
photographs on canvas  
Private collection

60–60.6

'Ages of the World', an installation made especially for the Royal Academy, speaks of a geological time frame so long it is almost beyond our comprehension.

Part totem, part funeral pyre, it refers to the history of our planet's evolution, the Romantic aspiration of art, the poetry of ruins, and the relationship between the human individual and the deep time of the cosmos.

The work touches on the great events of our planet, from the devastating impact of meteorites to the creation of fossil fuels, and hints at an ongoing pattern that will continue, referencing Kiefer's belief in the cyclical nature of time.

## List of works

**60**



54



17

# **Ages of the World**

(Die Erdzeitalter)

2014

Installation, mixed media

Private collection

**60.1**

# **Ages of the World**

(Die Erdzeitalter)

2014

Installation with gouache-painted photographs on  
canvas

Private collection

# **60.2**

## **Ages of the World**

(Die Erdzeitalter)

2014

Installation with gouache-painted photographs on canvas

Private collection

# **60.3**

## **Ages of the World**

(Die Erdzeitalter)

2014

Installation with gouache-painted photographs on canvas

Private collection

# **60.4**

## **Ages of the World**

(Die Erdzeitalter)

2014

Installation with gouache-painted photographs on canvas

Private collection

# 60.5

## **Ages of the World**

(Die Erdzeitalter)

2014

Installation with gouache-painted photographs on canvas

Private collection

# 60.6

## **Ages of the World**

(Die Erdzeitalter)

2014

Installation with gouache-painted photographs on canvas

Private collection

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# Anselm Kiefer

8



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# Audio points for 8



Main commentary

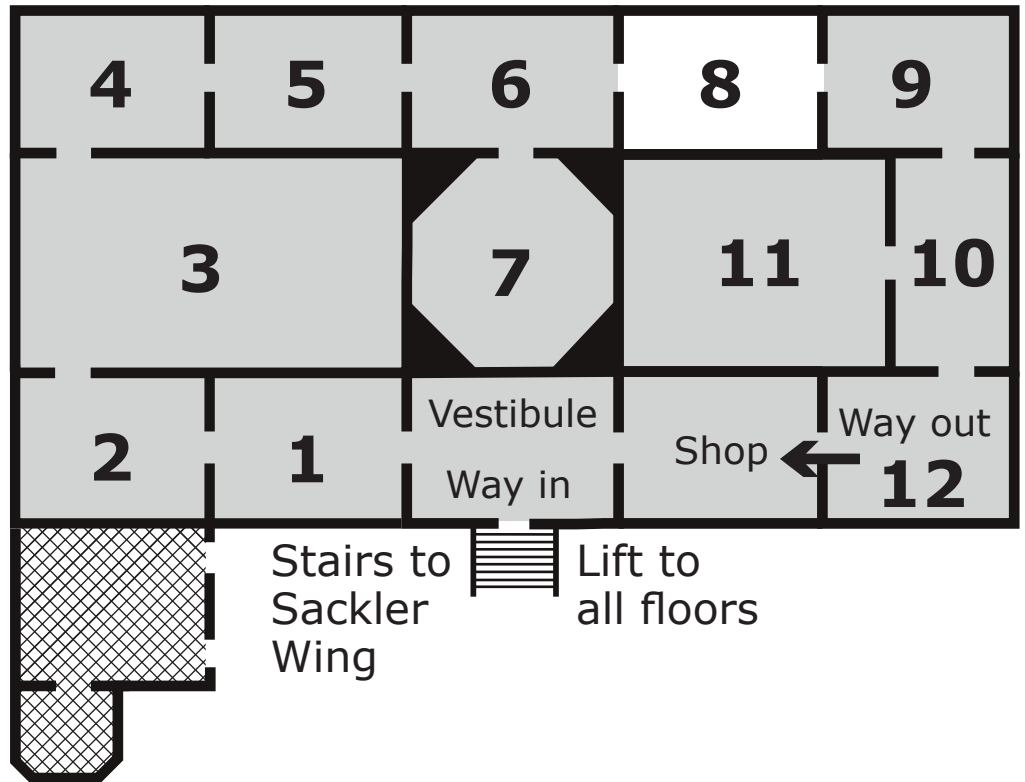


Descriptive commentary

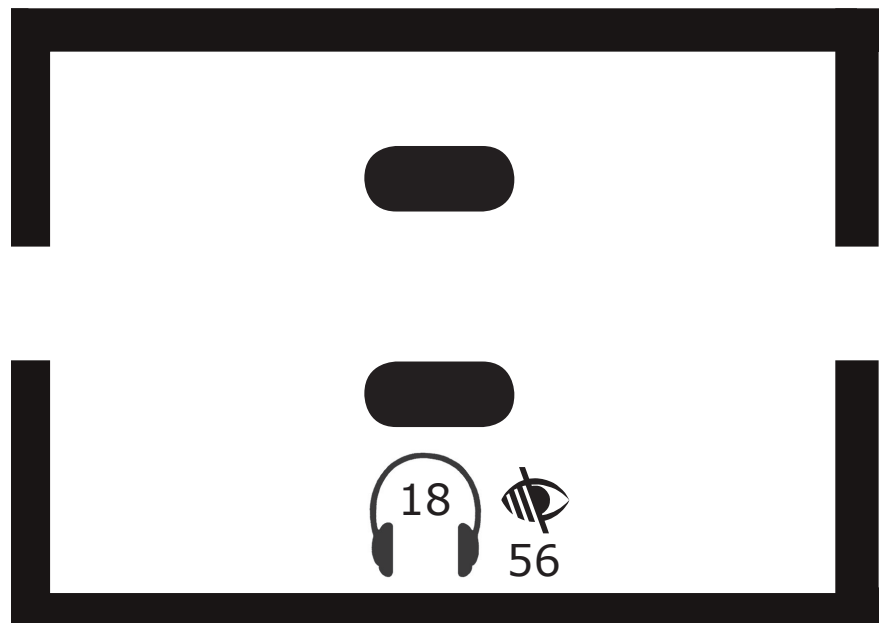


56 Black Flakes (cat. 59)





You are in 8



 Seating

# **Anselm Kiefer**

Main Galleries, Burlington House

27 September - 14 December 2014

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# 8

Both paintings in this gallery take their inspiration from two poems by Paul Celan: 'Schwarze Flocken' ('Black Flakes') and 'Aschenkraut' ('Ash Leaves').

The works feature burnt and lead books. Kiefer regards lead as an important material, one that affects him more than all other metals.

His first engagement with it came at Hornbach, where he encountered a system of pipes made of the material and became fascinated with its shapes, textures, colour, strength and malleability. In 1985 he acquired the former lead roof of Cologne Cathedral when it was replaced, using it subsequently in his own work.

Lead has since been of fundamental importance to his work: he believes that it is the only material heavy enough to carry the weight of human history, and that its properties most closely resemble ours.

“It is in flux. It’s changeable and has potential to achieve a higher state of gold.”

This reference to alchemy, the transformation of base metals into gold – a subject that fascinates Kiefer – is perhaps a metaphor for the way his art can transform and redeem the past.

Such specific materials as sand, ash, salt, wheat, bricks or lead have played a consistently important role in Kiefer’s work. Loaded with meaning, they are endowed with a spirit that as an artist he seeks to discover and reveal.

The snowy, barren landscapes that we see here feature often in Kiefer’s painting.

In Celan’s poems, snow and ice often refer to the landscape of the Holocaust and symbolise the oblivion and silence that descended over Europe at that time.

Here the lines of the poem written into the furrows of the field, the ploughed stubble remaining, seem to echo the barbed wire of the camps.

Kiefer has said of text that whereas it sometimes affirms the meaning of the painting, it often “serves to cancel or to contradict the painting ... to play devil’s advocate with the painting, to challenge it ... to interrogate” it.

**List of works (clockwise in order of hang)**

**58**

## **For Paul Celan, Ash Flower**

(Für Paul Celan,  
Aschenblume)

2006

Oil, emulsion, acrylic, shellac and burnt books on canvas  
Private collection

**59**

## **Black Flakes**

(Schwarze Flocken)

2006

Oil, emulsion, acrylic, charcoal, lead book, branches and  
plaster on canvas  
Grothe family private collection



56



18

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# Anselm Kiefer

9



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# Audio points for 9



Main commentary



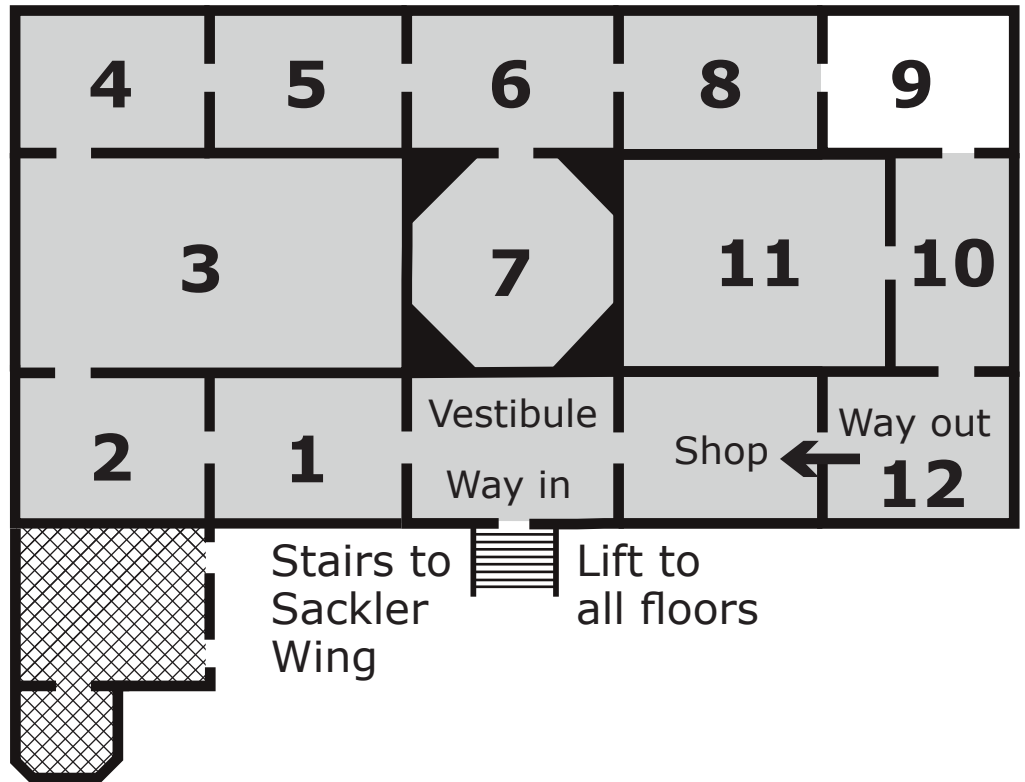
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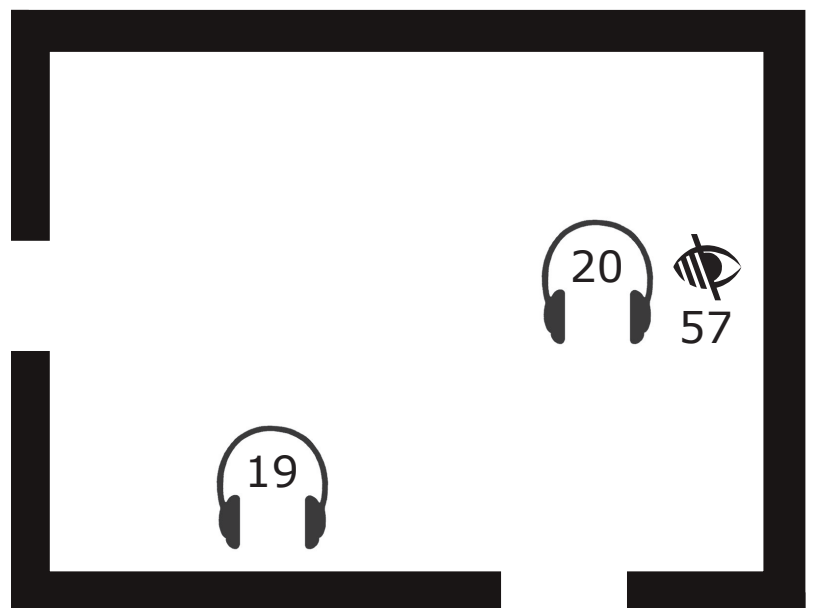
The Secret Life of Plants for Robert Fludde (cats. 62.1-62.3)



57 For Paul Celan: Stalks of the Night (cat. 61)



You are in 9



# **Anselm Kiefer**

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# 9

No longer just the material of which objects applied to the canvas are made, lead has now become the very “canvas” itself. The artist has created his own universe on these sheets of lead, in which stars are represented by diamonds set into the material.

Diamonds were also employed by Kiefer in an action of 1989 in which he dropped them onto the soil in a tunnel in Dover, leaving them to become part of the earth once again, simultaneously exchanging the world above with the world below, in the true spirit of alchemy.

Kiefer himself appears once more in ‘For Paul Celan: Stalks of the Night’, again reminding us of the connections between Heaven and Earth.

The silver arc over his body is a reference to an earlier watercolour entitled 'Everyone Stands Under His Own Dome of Heaven' (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), the imagery suggesting that we are at the centre of our own individual worlds, each with our own perceptions and understanding of that unique context.

**List of works (clockwise in order of hang)**

**97**

**For Ingeborg Bachmann:  
The Renowned Orders of  
the Night**

(Für Ingeborg Bachmann:  
die berühmten Orden der  
Nacht)

1987/2014

Mixed media

Private collection

# 61



57



20

## **For Paul Celan: Stalks of the Night**

(Für Paul Celan: Halme der Nacht)

1998–2013

Acrylic, emulsion, oil, shellac, polystyrene, silver leaf, cardboard and plants on canvas

Private collection

# 62.1-62.3



19

## **The Secret Life of Plants for Robert Fludd**

1987/2014

Mixed media

Private collection



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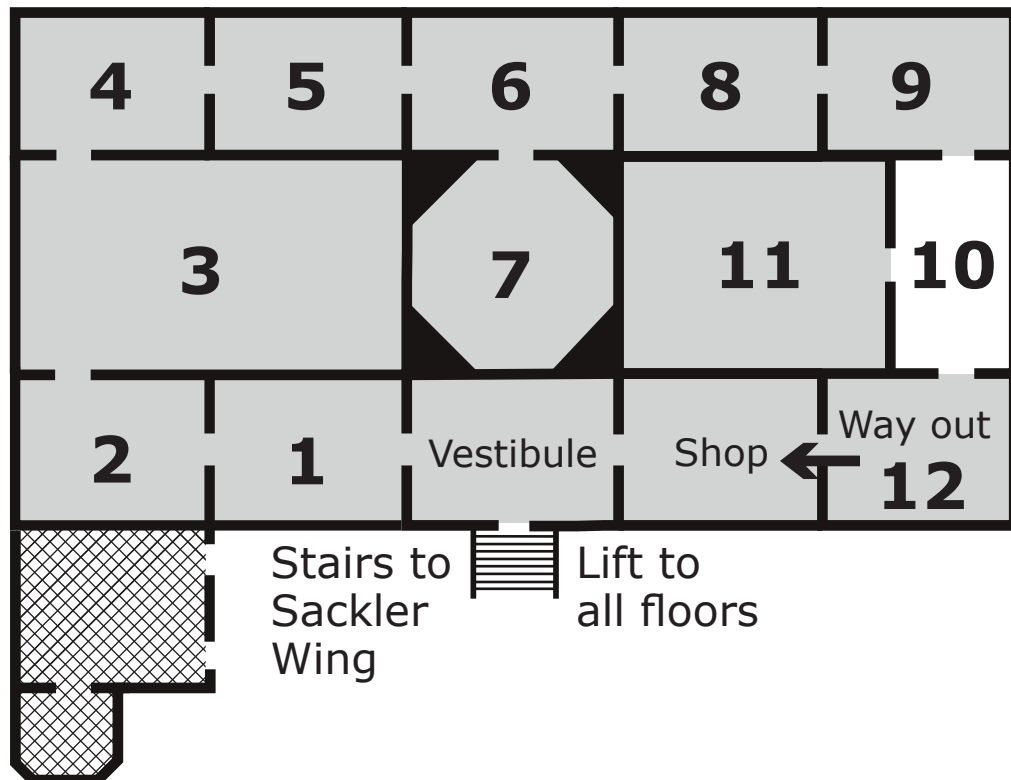
Royal Academy of Arts

# Anselm Kiefer

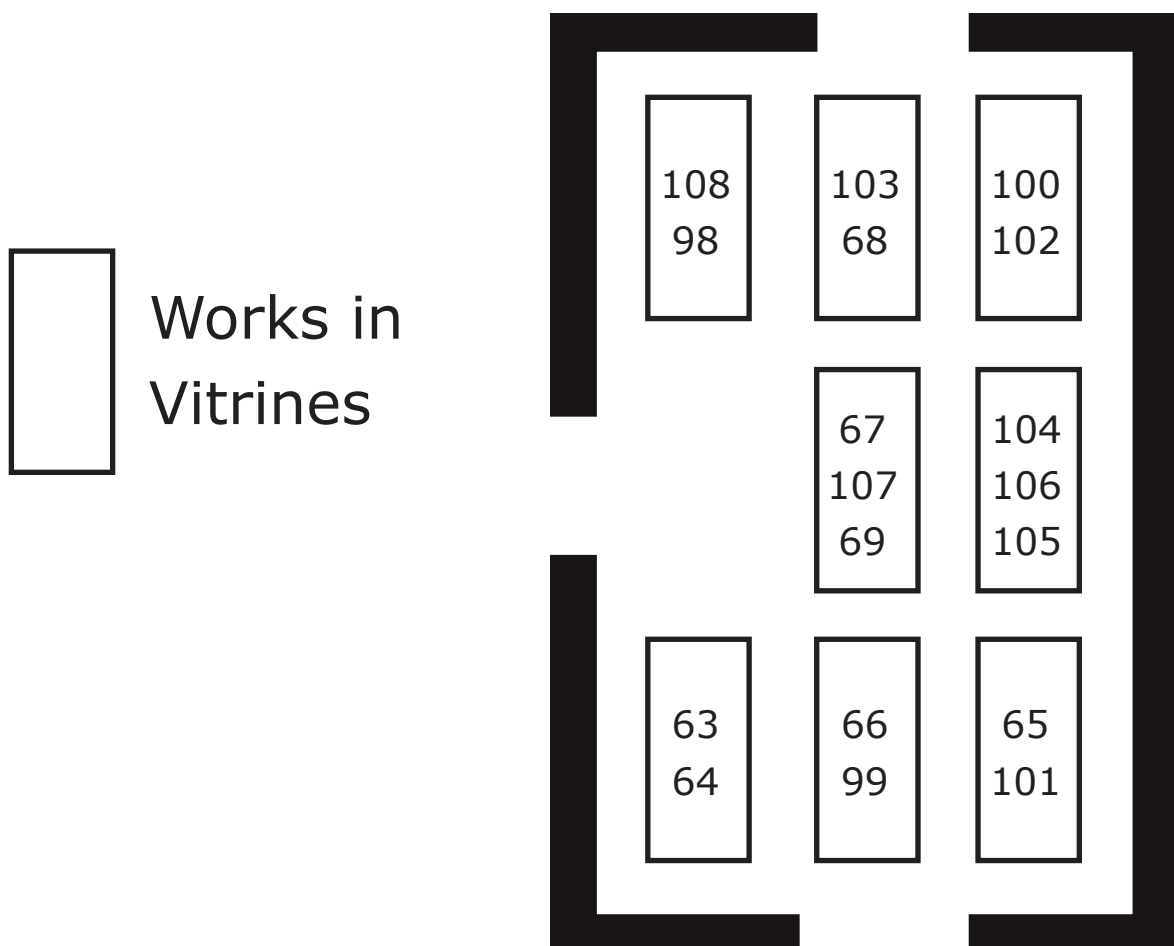
10, 11 & 12



**Do not remove from gallery**



You are in 10



# **Anselm Kiefer**

Main Galleries, Burlington House

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Introduction to 12, label for cat. 70

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# 10

Since 1968 Kiefer has consistently returned to books as subject-matter.

As a primary source of knowledge and as repositories of history and world religions, they are powerful and paradoxical symbols for the artist. Kiefer's books are visual, and rarely text-based: "You do not have to read my books. You only need to scan. I am not picturing words. I am trying to re-create a memory."

The constant presence of books throughout Kiefer's oeuvre is matched by his commitment to watercolour, and here we see the two come together in a new series of plaster books.

In this series of books, Kiefer explores a small number of focused themes.

The most powerful reference is to the nineteenth-century French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840–1917). Kiefer was encouraged to respond to his book 'Cathedrals of France' (1914) by the Musée Rodin in Paris, to mark the centenary of the book's publication.

Kiefer cites Rodin not only in the painting of cathedrals but with his erotic watercolours, which resonate powerfully with Rodin's own. Unlike Rodin, Kiefer brings erotic watercolours and places of worship together, touching on his interest in the ecstasies of the saints when portrayed in moments of enlightenment or rapturous communion with God.

Other books speak of the presence of Aurora, the Roman goddess of dawn, or of Eos, her Greek counterpart. Eos consorted with the god of war, Ares, and was cursed with unquenchable sexual desire by the jealous Aphrodite, which resulted in her abducting a number of young men in order to satisfy her needs.

There are also references to the French intellectual and literary figure Georges Bataille (1897–1962), whose writings were deemed pornographic in his day.

## List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

**100**

### **Solaris (While the Ocean Became Inky)**

(Solaris (während der Ozean tintig wurde))

2013

Illustrated 16-page book with watercolour and pencil on plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**102**

### **Walpurgis**

2013

Illustrated 14-page book with watercolour and pencil on plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**104**

**Eos**

(Hyperion – Thei)

2013

Illustrated 18-page book with watercolour and pencil on  
plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**106**

**Eos**

(Hyperion – Theia – Eos –  
Helios)

2013

Illustrated 20-page book with watercolour and pencil on  
plaster on cardboard

Private collection



**105**

**Eos**

(Hyperion – Theia – Eos –  
Helios)

2013

Illustrated 20-page book with watercolour and pencil on  
plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**65**

**Untitled**

2013

Illustrated 16-page book, watercolour and pencil on  
plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**101**

**Rem Tene, Verba  
Sequentur**

**2013**

Illustrated 16-page book with watercolour and pencil on  
plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**99**

**The Cathedrals of France  
(Les cathédrales de France)**

**2013**

Illustrated 20-page book with watercolour and pencil on  
plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**66**

**The Cathedrals of France**  
(Les cathédrales de France)

2013

Illustrated 18-page book with watercolour and pencil on  
plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**69**

**For Georges Bataille:**  
**Blue of Noon**

(Für Georges Bataille:  
le bleu du ciel)

2013

Illustrated 18-page book with watercolour and pencil on  
plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**107**

**Eos**

(Hyperion – Theia)

2013

Illustrated 18-page book with watercolour and pencil on plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**67**

**The Cathedrals of France**

(Les cathédrales de France)

2013

Illustrated 18-page book with watercolour and pencil on plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**68**

## **Autumn Crocus**

**(Herbstzeitlose)**

**2013**

Illustrated 18-page book with watercolour and pencil on plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**103**

## **Solaris**

**2013**

Illustrated 16-page book with watercolour and pencil on plaster on cardboard

Private collection

**108**

**Under the Linden – on  
the Heath...**

(Under der Linden – an der  
Heide...)

2013

Illustrated 40-page book with electrolysed lead, bound  
Private collection

**98**

**Under the Linden**  
(Under der Linden)

2013

Illustrated 14-page linen-bound book with acrylic,  
emulsion, oil and shellac on photographs mounted on  
canvas with electrolysed lead

Courtesy Lia Rumma Gallery, Milan/Naples

**63**

**Under the Linden – on  
the Heath**

(Under der Linden – an der  
Heide)

2013

Illustrated 36-page book with electrolysed lead, bound  
Private collection

**64**

**Under the Linden**  
(Under der Linden)

2013

Illustrated 14-page linen-bound book with acrylic,  
emulsion, oil and shellac on photograph mounted on  
canvas with electrolysed lead

Courtesy Lia Rumma Gallery, Milan/Naples

# Audio points for 11



Main commentary

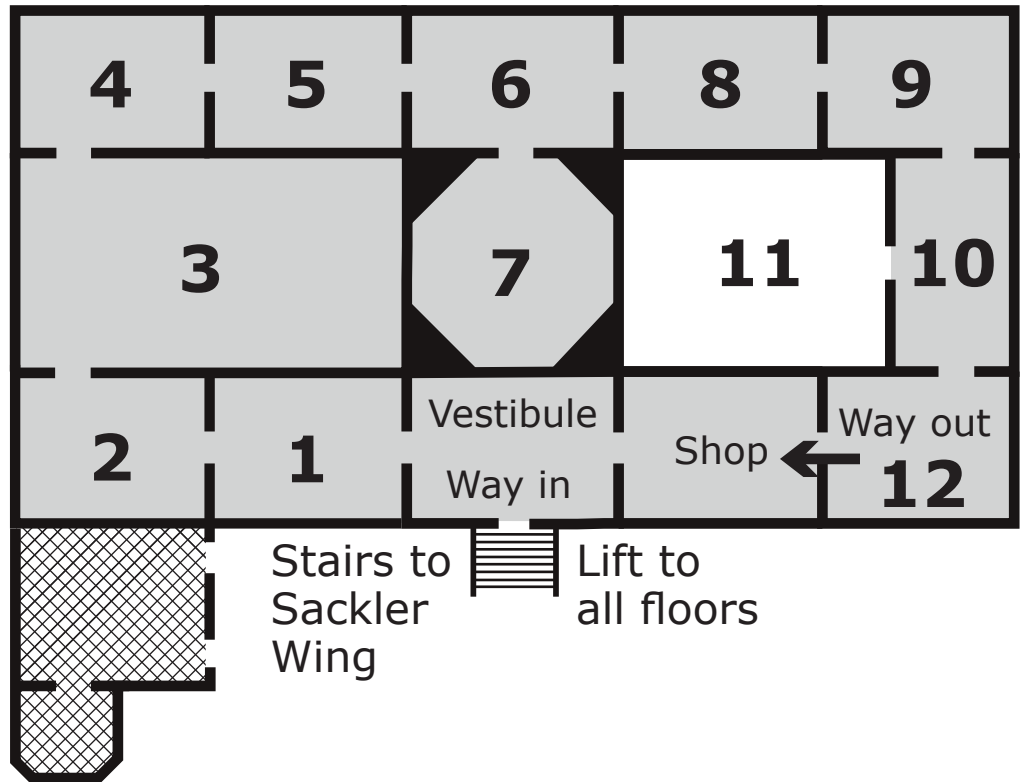


Descriptive commentary



Morgenthau Plan (cat. 71)





You are in 11



# 11

Colour has played an important role in Kiefer's painting throughout his practice. Although his earlier work may suggest a singularly monochromatic key, it is not unusual for him to begin a canvas with a colour photograph.

Onto this, employing it as an under-drawing or series of notes, he applies coloured paint, augmenting the image and creating his own until the colour register takes him back towards the blacks, greys and whites for which he is known.

In more recent years Kiefer has revelled in the use of colour and here we have a celebration of landscape and its rich bounty.

Yet its underlying symbolism reminds us that Kiefer is an artist concerned with the big questions of our past, present and future.

In the 'Morgenthau' series of paintings in this gallery, Kiefer refers to the 1944 plan proposed by the US Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau Jr, to transform Germany into a pre-industrial, agricultural nation in order to limit her ability to wage future wars.

Although the Morgenthau Plan was never realised, it represented an alternative post-war Germany occupied more by farmland than industry.

News of the plan was leaked to the press in 1944 and Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, used it to unite his countrymen in their last stand, possibly extending the war and its impact on human life.

Within the tradition of landscape painting we see clearly Kiefer's associations with the nineteenth-century German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich and with notions of the Sublime in nature, whose grandeur inspires awe and wonder.

The overriding reference here, however, is to Vincent van Gogh, whose late paintings of wheat fields are echoed here with their black crows, symbolising death and resurrection, hovering menacingly above.

## **List of works (clockwise in order of hang)**

### **Ex cat Lapis Philosophorum**

2014

Acrylic, emulsion, oil, shellac, metal, volcanic stone, gold leaf and sediment of electrolysis on photograph mounted on canvas

Private collection

### **Ex cat For Adalbert Stifter (Für Adalbert Stifter)**

2014

Acrylic, emulsion, oil, shellac, plaster and sediment of electrolysis on photograph mounted on canvas

Private collection

# 74

## **The Morgenthau Plan** (Der Morgenthau Plan)

2013

Acrylic, emulsion, oil, shellac, used pair of shoes and sediment of electrolysis on photograph mounted on canvas

Private collection

# 71

## **Morgenthau Plan**

2013

Acrylic, emulsion, oil, shellac, metal, fragments of paint, plaster, gold leaf and sediment of electrolysis on photograph mounted on canvas

Private collection



# 73

## **Ignis Sacer**

2013

Acrylic, emulsion, oil, shellac, plaster, gold leaf and sediment of electrolysis on photograph mounted on canvas

Private collection

## **Ex cat**

### **For Walther von d.**

### **Vogelweide**

(Für Walther von d.  
Vogelweide)

2014

Acrylic, emulsion, oil, shellac, plaster and sediment of electrolysis on photograph mounted on canvas

Private collection

# 75

## **L'Origine du monde**

2014

Acrylic, emulsion, oil, shellac, metal, plaster, gold leaf, volcanic stone and sediment of electrolysis on photograph mounted on canvas

Private collection



# 12

In this final gallery Kiefer returns to the woodcut and to the Rhine of his homeland, and to themes that have fascinated him throughout his work.

Kiefer's interest in the Rhine, marking the division between Germany and France, is linked to his consideration of borders.

The basement of Kiefer's childhood home, close to the river's banks, would regularly flood with the springtime meltwaters, raising the question of where the border now lay, and whether France had indeed entered his basement.

In this virtual forest through which we can walk, its leporello format echoing the pages of a book, Kiefer also makes reference to the influence of the great German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), as well as to Paul Celan and the German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528).

The totemic Rhine runs across the works and key motifs such as the melancholic polyhedron, the crucible of flames, the Holy Trinity and the bomb-damaged defences and bunkers of the Siegfried Line are also recorded here.

The polyhedron is a motif repeated in a number of Kiefer's works.

It is derived from Dürer's famous engraving 'Melencolia I', which depicts an angel surrounded by symbolic objects, and whose meaning art historians still debate today.

Melancholy has conventionally been most closely associated with artists and creativity, but it was also connected with the planet Saturn, and, because of the planet's affinity with the element lead, to processes of alchemical transmutation.

# 70.1–70.13



## **The Rhine** (Der Rhein)

1982–2013

Collages of woodcuts on canvas with acrylic  
and shellac

Private collection

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