

PRESS RELEASE

# Anselm Kiefer

## *Für Walther von der Vogelweide*

25 JULY – 3 OCTOBER 2020

OPENING 25 JULY, 10 AM – 1 PM  
GALERIE THADDAEUS ROPAC SALZBURG  
MIRABELLPLATZ 2, 5020 SALZBURG

AN ONLINE VIEWING EXPERIENCE OF THE EXHIBITION  
WILL LAUNCH SIMULTANEOUSLY



*The pictures were painted in Barjac, in the south of France [...] The grass, the entire vegetation was so dried out that the light yellow stalks and the withered thistles made for a whole variety of ochre and yellow shades which delighted me; which, in their beauty on the verge of decay, reminded me of the Grim Reaper, Eros and Thanatos. As I walked through the glowing fields, I kept thinking of Walther von der Vogelweide – his love-songs, his poems, so closely bound up with his life.*

**– Anselm Kiefer**

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Salzburg presents a new series of monumental works by Anselm Kiefer dedicated to Walther von der Vogelweide (c. 1170 – c. 1230), the lyrical love poet, or ‘minnesinger’, whose significance and legacy have been explored in seminal works by the artist since the 1970s. These new works reference the medieval lyricist’s most famous poem ‘Under der linden’, which recounts a romantic meeting of two lovers of different social standing in the countryside. Anselm Kiefer states, ‘*I live in language. [...] It’s language that dominates me. I listen to it. Much of it remains in the dark to me, but I carry the words with me and, now and then, I suddenly correlate with what is said to me.*’

The experience of nature and the broken blades of grass and flowers described in the poem are recurring elements in Anselm Kiefer’s pictorial language, which the artist has used increasingly since his earlier series *Für Paul Celan*, *Die Ungeborenen* and *Morgenthau Plan*.

For the past forty years, Anselm Kiefer’s work has developed through a process of accumulation, the mingling and reworking of themes and motifs which recur and overlap repeatedly across diverse media. The artist’s ongoing preoccupation with cultural memory, identity and history, in particular his exploration of German post-war identity, lends his works their multi-layered iconography, fuelled by a canon of historical, mythological and literary sources, as well as his personal biography.

Anselm Kiefer often uses depictions of nature to explore the fundamental questions of human existence, with a dialectic of beauty and destruction inherent in his works. In *Eros - Thanatos*, one of the nineteen works on view in the exhibition, folded and tangled stalks formed through the gestural application of thick paint break up the pictorial space, seeming to advance towards the viewer as if by an invisible force.

Following the principle of balance, Anselm Kiefer frequently applies specific objects to his canvases. The material weight of the scythe in *Eros - Thanatos*, and in several other works from this series, extends Anselm Kiefer’s existing canon of objects to include a further highly symbolic item. The scythe provides a necessary counterbalance to the spiritual or mystical nature of the work and invites art historical as well as philosophical or literary interpretations.

Since antiquity, the scythe has been used as a tool for harvesting grain and, in the context of Christian iconography, has become a symbol of harvest time, fertility, but also of death, God’s judgment and eternity. In the visual arts, Cronos, as the personification of time, and the figure of death are both depicted with a sickle. As an attribute of farming and the working class, the sickle became a national emblem and political symbol in the 20th century. The sickle and the scythe further symbolise that all the fruit that time produces is ultimately harvested, while its curvature illustrates that all time circles back on itself. Anselm Kiefer thus addresses the codes and conceptions that enable the viewer to make complex semiotic connections.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Donaueschingen, Germany, in 1945, Anselm Kiefer now lives and works between Paris and Barjac, France. The artist studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe, and later in Düsseldorf, where he became a student of Joseph Beuys. His works are represented in major museum collections and are shown in institutional exhibitions worldwide. Most recently, The Jan Michalski Foundation, Montricher (2019); Met Breuer, New York (2018); Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia (2017); State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (2017); Rodin Museum, Paris (2017); Albertina, Vienna (2016); and the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015) have dedicated comprehensive solo exhibitions to Anselm Kiefer's work. In 2018, Anselm Kiefer's site-specific sculpture *Uraeus* was publicly exhibited in front of the Rockefeller Center in New York. Find out more about Anselm Kiefer here.

Image: Anselm Kiefer, *Eros - Thanatos*, 2019, Emulsion, oil paint, acrylic, shellac, gold leaf, wood and metal on canvas, 280 x 380 cm (110,24 x 149,61 in). Foto: Georges Poncet.

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OPENING HOURS  
TUESDAY – FRIDAY 10 AM – 6 PM  
SATURDAY 10 AM – 2 PM

OPENING HOURS FROM 25<sup>th</sup> JULY – 31<sup>st</sup> AUGUST  
MONDAY – SATURDAY 10 AM – 6 PM

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