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Gagosian Announces Exhibition of Paintings by Anselm Kiefer in Hong Kong

Opening May 17, 2023, *hortus conclusus* Surveys the Artist's Landscapes



Anselm Kiefer, *Danaë*, 2014, emulsion, oil, acrylic, charcoal, gold leaf, and sediment of electrolysis on canvas, 110 1/4 x 149 5/8 inches (280 x 380 cm) © Anselm Kiefer. Photo: Georges Poncet

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Rubble is like a plant's blossoms; it is the radiant highpoint of an incessant metabolism, the beginning of a rebirth.

—Anselm Kiefer

HONG KONG, May 13, 2023—Gagosian is pleased to announce *Anselm Kiefer: hortus conclusus*, an exhibition that surveys four decades of the artist's landscape paintings. Capping a year of exhibitions across Europe and the United States, this is the first to feature his work in Hong Kong for more than ten years.

Kiefer's thirteenth solo exhibition at Gagosian since 1998, *hortus conclusus* follows *Questi scritti, quando verranno bruciati, daranno finalmente un po' di luce* (Andrea Emo) at Palazzo Ducale, Venice (2022–23) and *Exodus*, a bicoastal exhibition presented at the gallery in New York (2022) and at Gagosian at the Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles (2022–23). This coming October, Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut (LaM) in France will present *Anselm Kiefer: Photography at the Beginning*, the first exhibition dedicated to the artist's photographs.

Kiefer emphasizes the allegorical aspects of landscape with the exhibition title, which is Latin for “enclosed garden” and derived from a book of the Hebrew Bible known as the Song of Songs or Song of Solomon. In Medieval and Renaissance Europe, the term described the iconography of the Virgin Mary depicted in a walled garden, a sheltered place for meditation. For Kiefer, the idea of

hortus conclusus offers a view of nature that is both sublime and idyllic, thematizing growth, renewal, and the cycles of life. As with the traditions of East Asian painting, his landscapes move beyond direct representation to convey responses to the forms and forces of nature, expressed in both art and poetry.

Central to his practice from the 1970s to the present, Kiefer's landscapes are rooted in the symbolism of creation and destruction, history and memory. The canvases on view in Hong Kong envelop the viewer with rich colors and thick layers of paint, straw, and other materials, and include inscribed allusions to poetry and mythology. While some paintings represent land that has been burnt or barren, others envision lush growth and seasonal transformation.

The exhibition's earliest work is *Dein aschenes Haar, Sulamith (Your ashen hair, Shulamith)* (1981). Alluding to the poetry of Paul Celan, this painting suggests scorched earth and ashen terrain. The most recent painting, *Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr (Who has no house now, will never build one)* (2022), is an autumn landscape that depicts a tree among fallen leaves. Inspired by verses by Rainer Maria Rilke, it meditates on themes of transience, resilience, and natural beauty.

Rather than depict a naturalistic scene, *Danaë* (2014) evokes elemental metamorphosis, with gold leaf and verdant greens derived from the sediment of a copper solution transformed through chemical electrolysis. This unique material is also prominent in *Waldsteig, Für Adalbert Stifter (Forest path, For Adalbert Stifter)* (2013–19), which includes a book made of lead, a recurring motif and material for Kiefer. Here, abundant vines and flowers reinforce the work's dedication to a nineteenth-century Austrian writer renowned for vivid descriptions of nature. *Wheat field with reaper* (2014) pays homage to Vincent van Gogh, whose life and paintings are a touchstone for Kiefer. Its composition refers to his predecessor's final masterpiece, *Wheatfield with Crows* (1890), with its densely textured surface, diverging paths, and high, inaccessible horizon line. Like Van Gogh, Kiefer emphasizes the expressive potentials of landscape painting, encompassing aspects of both natural forces and the human condition through his engagement with the *hortus conclusus* tradition.

Anselm Kiefer was born in 1945 in Donaueschingen, Germany, and lives and works in France. His work is collected by museums worldwide and has been permanently installed at the Musée du Louvre (2007) and the Panthéon (2020), both in Paris. Exhibitions include Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (2010–11); *Shevirat Ha-Kelim (Breaking of the Vessels)*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel (2011–12); *Beyond Landscape*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2013–14); Royal Academy of Arts, London (2014), Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015–16); *L'Alchimie du livre*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (2015–16); *The Woodcuts*, Albertina, Vienna (2016); *Pour Paul Celan*, Grand Palais Éphémère, Paris (2021); and *Questi scritti, quando verranno bruciati, daranno finalmente un po' di luce (Andrea Emo)*, Palazzo Ducale, Venice (2022–23). In 2017, he was awarded the J. Paul Getty Medal for his contribution to the arts.

#AnselmKiefer

ANSELM KIEFER

hortus conclusus

Opening reception: Wednesday, May 17, 6–8pm

May 17–August 5, 2023

7/F Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

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