Montréal, January 24, 2006. Gigantic, monumental, colossal—words aren’t big enough to describe the work of Anselm Kiefer. A major event in itself, the Anselm Kiefer exhibition will stand as a highlight in Montréal’s cultural life and, no doubt, in the history of the Musée. The Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal presents Anselm Kiefer: Heaven – Earth from February 11 to April 30, 2006.

The exhibition, the first major showing of Kiefer’s work in North America in twenty years, and the first ever in Canada, contains some fifty pieces produced from 1969 to 2005: paintings, some of them as much as six metres in size, books, lead sculptures and works on paper. Subtitled Heaven – Earth, this thematic survey reveals the different layers of meaning suggested by the artist’s work of the past three decades exploring the dialogue between heaven and earth. It ponders a civilization in search of spirituality but grappling with the weight of its human condition, beyond cultures and religions. Buch mit Flügeln (Book with Wings), for example, is uplifting with its wings, yet earthbound with its thousands of kilograms of weight.

Kiefer is himself a monument in contemporary art. Born in Donaueschingen, Germany, just as the Second World War was ending, he is considered one of the most important and relevant artists of our day. Now based in Barjac, France, he continues to explore the fundamental experiences of human existence through mythology, history and time. To convey these rich historical and philosophical metaphors, Kiefer makes use of highly symbolic materials such as clay, ash, gold leaf, seeds, dried plants and lead.

The exhibition opens with the oldest Kiefer work extant, Die Himmel (The Heavens), 1969, a small book containing cloud and sky pictures cut out of magazines and pasted onto blank pages. This is followed by a series of works in which Kiefer introduces some of the symbols—trees, fire, artist’s palette, fallow fields, landscapes—he has employed throughout his career. These early pieces are also typical of the use he makes of his own image and his cursive writing, and his practice of freely combining symbols from various religious and mystical traditions. The show also includes several paintings from the artist’s Attic series of the 1970s, in which his woody-grained studio at the time—the attic of an old German schoolhouse—served as a stage for recreating mythological and historical events.

Among the different media Kiefer has worked with over the years, bookmaking has been a constant and central part of his art. His books have become free-standing sculptures, massive symbols of his investigations of world knowledge through images. The exhibition also includes five newly created works that have never been exhibited, mixed-media books that depict earth
and stars. The artist’s books exemplify his process of combining seemingly disparate historical symbols and images. He has commented: “The book, the idea of a book or the image of a book, is a symbol of learning, of transmitting knowledge . . . I make my own books to find my way through the old stories.”

Kiefer’s art reflects his interest in humankind’s attempts throughout history to grasp the workings and mysteries of the cosmos. Be prepared for a physical and even metaphysical experience of staggering power.

Anselm Kiefer: Heaven – Earth originated at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, where it was organized by the Museum’s chief curator, Michael Auping. Paulette Gagnon, chief curator of the Musée d’art contemporain, is responsible for the Montréal presentation.

Montréal is the exhibition’s first stop in northeastern North America. Initially presented in fall 2005 in Forth Worth, it will next travel to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

The Musée d’art contemporain is a provincially owned corporation funded by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec. It receives additional funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts. The exhibition Anselm Kiefer is presented with assistance from Tourisme Montréal. The official exhibition hotel is Le Saint-Sulpice Hôtel-Montréal. The Musée also thanks the Lichen advertising agency for its financial support.

Musée hours:
Tuesday to Sunday, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Admission:
Adults: $8; Students: $4; Seniors: $6; Families: $16
Free admission for children under 12 and members of the Fondation du Musée

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In connection with the exhibition
ANSELM KIEFER: HEAVEN – EARTH

Publications and Boutique

A substantial, 186-page catalogue, titled *Anselm Kiefer – Heaven and Earth*, was published by the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas. It contains an essay by Michael Auping, the Museum’s chief curator and organizer of the exhibition, an interview by Auping with the artist and colour plates of the works shown along with critical comments on each of them. It also includes a list of works, a chronology of the artist’s one-man shows and a selective bibliography. The catalogue may be purchased for $65 (softcover) or $95 (hardcover) at the Musée’s Olivieri bookstore.

To mark the occasion, the Musée d’art contemporain is also devoting a special issue (20 pages) of the Journal du Musée to Kiefer. In addition to presenting the activities organized in connection with the exhibition, it features an article by the Musée’s chief curator Paulette Gagnon, who is responsible for the Montréal presentation, and reproduces Michael Auping’s interview with the artist. The Journal du Musée is available at the Musée ticket counter for $2.

As well, the Musée Boutique, located in the main hall of Place des Arts, offers visitors a selection of products inspired by the exhibition: bookmarks, postcards and posters.

Two major works on loan to the Musée

The Anselm Kiefer exhibition also provides an opportunity to display two major works currently on loan to the Musée from private collections. *Kartunkel Fee (Carbuncle Fairy)*, 1990, forms an integral part of the exhibition and its theme. This work is on loan from the Ludmer Collection, Montréal.

In addition, the exhibition *The Collection*, which spotlights 10 major works from the Musée’s permanent collection and is being presented at the same time as *Heaven – Earth*, will give the public a view of another Kiefer painting, *Die Fraüen der Antike (Women of Antiquity)*, 1999, from the series of the same name. *Women of Antiquity* is on loan from a private collection.
Lecture series and audioguide

A wide range of tools has been developed by the Education Service to accompany visitors as they experience Kiefer’s work. Two talks are scheduled in the Point[st]s of View series. First, on Wednesday, February 15, 2006, at 6 p.m., the public can visit the exhibition with Paulette Gagnon as their guide. Then, on Wednesday, April 26, 2006 at 6 p.m., Paulette Gagnon and Marie-France Bérard, educator in charge of tours at the Musée, will moderate a Dialogue on Anselm Kiefer, which will discuss interpreting, understanding and receiving, or how to approach a body of work with such an abundance of complex references. Admission is free.

In conjunction with Les Belles soirées et matinées organized by the Université de Montréal, the Musée will host a series of lectures devoted to Kiefer. Moderated by Marie-France Bérard, the three talks will take place on three consecutive Tuesdays. February 21: Le travail de la mémoire: Kiefer et la nouvelle peinture allemande; February 28: Transparence et opacité: la peinture comme récit et comme espace de fascination; and March 7: Processus et matériaux: l’artiste alchimiste. Tickets for the series cost $55; seniors: $40; students: $30. Telephone reservations: (514) 343-2020.

Finally, an audioguide, available in French and English versions, will allow visitors to go at their own pace and will enhance their understanding of 18 of Kiefer’s works. Three options are offered: comments on the work, artist quotations and related information. The guides are narrated by actors Cédric Noël and Pier Paquette in French and English, respectively. Cost: $2 (on top of admission charge).

Reading rooms

A selection of monographs and catalogues on Kiefer is at visitors’ disposal in the Mariette Clermont Lounge adjoining the galleries. As well, the Media Centre offers visitors and researchers a more comprehensive array of publications on the artist and his work in its reading room, on the second floor of the Musée.

Workshops and Day Camp

Upcoming at the art workshops is Bits of the Cosmos, an activity for children aged four and over. Some of Kiefer’s pictures seem to contain a whole world within them. Their colossal scale sets off the imagination. After observing several works, participants will invent their own bits of the cosmos. For all, with family or friends. Sundays at 2 and 3 p.m., on February 26, March 5, 12, 19 and 26, and April 2 and 9. Free with purchase of Musée admission, and for children under 12 (must be accompanied by an adult). No reservation required.

For this year’s school break, March 6 to 10, a day camp revolving around Kiefer’s work will be held for children aged 8 to 11. Cost: $184.04 Information and registration: (514) 847-6239.
All Nighter

For the third year in a row, the Musée is joining with the Montréal High Lights Festival in presenting the Montréal All Nighter, from 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 25 to 5 a.m. on Sunday, February 26. This event will be a unique opportunity for festival-goers and tourists to visit the Kiefer exhibition free of charge.

Official exhibition hotel

The Musée is proud to announce that the exhibition is being presented with assistance from Tourisme Montréal and that Le Saint-Sulpice Hôtel-Montréal is the official hotel for the event.

Le Saint-Sulpice Hôtel-Montréal
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