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Anselm Kiefer

Heaven – Earth

February 11 to April 30, 2006

The show *Heaven – Earth* brings together some 50 artworks created over more than 35 years, offering an eloquent overview of Anselm Kiefer's work. The pieces in the exhibit are drawn from several cycles and show us recurring motifs that delineate a trajectory through time and history. Composed of paintings, sculptures, photographs, collages, mixed media and books, this masterful body of work reflects Kiefer's multiple imaginary spaces, nourished on myth and history, nature and culture, all foundational elements of human experience and all central to the artist's concerns. From austere structures, ruins, creations in wood, brick and clay to landscapes of burned, worked or stripped fields; from the sublime limitlessness of the sea to the infinite expanses of the universe; from the microcosms of nature to the macrocosm of the starry reaches; from ancient myth to historical and biblical figures—the range of subject matter portrays a philosophic, metaphoric and symbolic dimension where everything is continuous and related to memory and the passage of time.

Existential concerns play a fundamental role in Kiefer's artistic development; his work is also inhabited by poetry and a sense of *meaning lost*. It could be said that repressed memory unfolds into awareness, leading to the discovery of a singular process in which iconography is key. "In my painting, I tell stories to show what lies behind history. I make a hole and I go through it." Such are the words of an artist whose work sheds light on that which is already present in matter, in colour or the lack of it, in accumulations of clothing, seeds, dried plants, charred wood, ash, sand, glass, lead, barbed wire and metal strips... materials that allow us to apprehend an archaeology of creation. They are the emergent traces of buried worlds battling oblivion. The collages, watercolours, photographs and books contrast with the monumental and excessive nature of the paintings of history, landscapes and celestial spaces. Kiefer shows us painting tormented by history, binding traces of societal and personal dramas to vast painted spaces. His art alludes to the history of his native land and to legends, philosophy, literature, Nordic, Greek and Roman mythologies, Genesis and the kabbala. The exhibition shows how the primary creative directions of his work are linked to familiar myths, strikingly illustrating an approach that combines dense materiality, the immaterial and a complex grasp of the grandiose, close to chaos. The poetic nature, rich motifs and dense content are all evidence of the intense reflection that lies behind Kiefer's work. He gives us a series of complex motifs in which history, memory and poetry converge, sometimes presenting something verging on prophecy. Art historian Daniel Arasse wrote about Kiefer's paintings: "They offer themselves as sites of their own memories, memories created through his art."

Born in 1945 in Germany, at Donaueschingen in Baden-Württemberg, Anselm Kiefer has lived and worked in Barjac in the south of France since 1991. In 1993, at La Ribaute, his 40-hectare studio complex at the foot of the Cévennes, he began building a network of above- and underground chambers, structures, glass buildings, concrete monuments and installations. These constructions are new sites of memory, symbolic of the mysterious and close affinities between heaven and earth.

Anselm Kiefer has exhibited regularly since 1973. After studying law, languages and literature, he turned to painting, studying at the School of Fine Arts in Freiburg im Breisgau and pursuing his training in the visual arts at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, where he had discussions with Josef Beuys. His reputation has grown steadily since the late 1970s. In 1980 he represented Germany at the Venice Biennale, along with Georg Baselitz. While he has been widely exhibited in Europe, with shows at the Correr Museum in Venice in 1997, at La Chapelle de la Salpêtrière in Paris in 2000, and at the Beyeler Foundation in Basel in 2001, in the past two decades his museum shows in North America have been few, consisting of a touring retrospective organized by The Art Institute of Chicago and the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1986, and an exhibition of works on paper by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1998.

Organized by the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, *Heaven – Earth* is the first major exhibition of the work of Anselm Kiefer in Canada.

Paulette Gagnon

Cover: *Sternenfall*, 1995
(Falling Stars)
Oil on canvas
230 x 170 cm
Private collection, London

Karfunkel Fee, 1990
(Carbuncle Fairy)
Oil, emulsion, shellac,
charcoal and ashes on canvas
with lead airplane, poppy,
lead strips, copper wire
and dress
381 x 280.5 x 38 cm
On loan from The Ludmer
Collection, Montréal



Heaven Is

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An Interview with Anselm Kiefer, Conducted October 5, 2002, Barjac

Michael Auping: Titling an exhibition *Heaven – Earth*, as we have done here, requires a little explanation. Perhaps we should just begin with the very simple question, do you believe in heaven?

Anselm Kiefer: The title *Heaven – Earth* is a paradox because heaven and earth don't exist any more. The earth is round. The cosmos has no up and down. It is moving constantly. We can no longer fix the stars to create an ideal place. This is our dilemma.

MA: And yet we keep trying to find new ways to get to “the ideal place,” the place we assume we came from—to find the right direction.

AK: It is natural to search for our beginnings, but not to assume it has one direction. We live in a scientific future that early philosophers and alchemists could not foresee, but they understood very fundamental relationships between heaven and earth that we have forgotten. In the *Sefer Hechaloth*, the ancient book that came before the kabbala, there is no worry of directions. It describes stages, metaphors and symbols that float everywhere. Up and down were the same direction. The *Hechaloth* is the spiritual journey toward perfect cognition. North, south, east and west, up and down are not issues. For me, this also relates to time. Past, present and future are essentially the same direction. It is about finding symbols that move in all directions.

MA: Our religions all have heavens.

AK: We can't escape religion, but there is a difference between religion and heaven, and one doesn't necessarily lead to the other.

MA: You are not a “New Age” spiritualist. I know that for sure, but some people who see your images may wonder just what your position is in regard to religion.

AK: My spirituality is not New Age. It has been with me since I was a child. I know that in the last few decades religion has been made shiny and new. It's like a business creating a new product. They are selling salvation. I'm not interested in being saved. I'm interested in reconstructing symbols. It's about connecting with an older knowledge and trying to discover continuities in why we search for heaven.

MA: I can see fragments of continuity in your works between symbols that are ancient and those that take a more modern form, and for me that suggests a kind of hope within your landscapes. But there are also some very dark shadows in your images, literally in terms of colour, as well as in metaphor and content. It is as if in the same image we see a liberation of knowledge but the dark weight of history.

an Idea

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AK: There is always hope, but that must be combined with irony, and more important, skepticism. The context of knowledge is changing constantly. At one moment we pray from the top of a mountain and the next from a seat in a jet plane or a bomber cockpit. How can we not see that as ironic and skeptical?

MA: I understand what you are saying, but I'd like to backtrack a little. You were raised a Catholic.

AK: Yes.

MA: Did you attend church often?

AK: Sure. Religion was a part of my childhood and my youth. It was a very important thing. The rituals and rites were important. I can still do them in Latin. Of course, I knew the Latin before I knew what it meant. But I was involved, like many young people of my generation, in learning religion at an early age.

MA: Christian images are apparent in your work, but in many ways not as apparent as Jewish or even Gnostic references.

AK: Later, I discovered that Christian mythology was less complex and less sophisticated than Jewish mythology because the Christians limited their story to make it simple so that they could engage more people and defend their ideas. They had to fight with the Jewish traditions, with the Gnostics. It was a war of the use of knowledge. However, it wasn't just a defense against outside ideas. It was aggressive. Like politics, they wanted to win. You know, the first church in Rome was not defensive and not aggressive. It was quiet. It was spiritual in the sense of seeking a true discussion about god. It was exploring a new idea about humanity. But then there was "*iglesias triumphant*," the Triumph of the Church. And then the stones were stacked up and the buildings came, and the construction of the scholastics, Augustine and so on. They were very successful in limiting the meaning of the mythology. There were discussions about the Trinity and its meaning. Anyone who had ideas that complicated their specific picture was eliminated. This made Christianity very rigid and not very interesting. Whenever knowledge becomes rigid it stops living.

MA: In 1966, you visited the Monastery at La Tourette. Was this before you made the decision to be an artist?

Buch mit Flügeln, 1992-1994
(Book with Wings)
Lead, steel and tin
89.9 x 529.9 x 110.2 cm
Collection of the Modern Art
Museum of Fort Worth, Texas



AK: I began by studying law. I didn't study law to be a lawyer, but for the philosophical aspects of law, constitutional law. I was interested in how people live together without destroying each other.

I went to La Tourette while I was studying law. It may sound strange to go from the study of law to La Tourette, but it really wasn't. I had always been interested in law from a spiritual aspect. A constitution is not unlike the idea of church doctrine. People need a context or a content, something to bind them together. This could be stretched to mythologies. Law, mythology, religion—they are all structures for investigating human character. There was a well-known constitutional lawyer, Carl Schmitt. He was a very brilliant man who worked in the 1920s through the 1950s. Unfortunately, he got too involved with the Nazis. He was not really a fascist, but he got entangled with Nazi politics. They adopted him. He was very interesting in terms of bringing together legal theory and religious traditions—quite brilliant; but after the war, he was discriminated against. Nobody talked about him, even though he had made some very important contributions to constitutional law. I studied him because he was a very interesting man, as much a philosopher as a lawyer. When I was in Jerusalem, I found out that he was an adviser or consultant when they made their constitution. I think it was kept a secret for some time. He wrote a very interesting book about the Leviathan, the giant serpent that became an image of political power. I was interested in people like Schmitt because they got caught between the power of government and the power of God. We are all in that dilemma.

MA: Why did you go to La Tourette in the first place? I don't imagine that you went only to see a Le Corbusier building. You stayed there for three weeks.

AK: The Dominicans were there. I liked their teaching. They have an interesting history. I had read that they had many discussions with Corbusier about the shape of the building and the materials. It was a point in my life when I wanted to think quietly about the larger questions. Churches are the stages for transmitting knowledge, interpreting knowledge and ideas of transcendence. It's a history of conflicts and contradictions. A church is an important source of

knowledge and power. Corbusier knew that. I stayed there for three weeks in a cell. I thought about things. In a place like that you are not simply encouraged to think about god but to think about yourself, *Erkenne dich selbst*. Of course, you think about your relationship to your god.

Also, for me it was an inspiring building in the sense that a very simple material, a modern material, could be used to create a spiritual space. Great religions and great buildings are part of the sediment of time; like pieces of sand. Corbusier used the sand to construct a spiritual space. I discovered the spirituality of concrete—using earth to mould a symbol, a symbol of the imaginative and the spiritual world. He tried to make heaven on earth—the ancient paradox.

MA: How do you mean that?

AK: Heaven is an idea, a piece of ancient internal knowledge. It is not a physical construction.

MA: Two years after visiting La Tourette, you made a small book titled *Heaven*. I believe it was your first art work.

AK: It was the first work that I didn't destroy.

MA: You did a lot of books at that time. Probably the most famous, or infamous, was the *Occupations* photographs. You photographed yourself doing a Nazi salute at different locations in Europe. That seems so radically different from a book titled *Heaven*.

AK: Well, the *Occupations* was done in stages over a longer period of time, but yes. One is a very specific topic and one is a very big topic. It's like the macrocosmic and the microcosmic. I wanted to deal with large issues in my art, but that didn't keep me from studying my own history as a German. Also, that first book *Heaven* was not as romantic as it sounds.

MA: It's a collage book of shapes cut out of magazines—many of them little pieces of sky.

AK: I was very interested in media at that time. I realized that you could use any material to create imagery. What better than to use something so basic as popular magazines to create my own heaven. In a way I was testing to see if it worked.

MA: Did it?

AK: Of course, we can all create our own heaven using whatever materials we want. We always imagine heaven as something physical, as a place rather than as time. We have to have our illusions. I think heaven is about time, and is always changing. So there are many heavens in this book.

*Dein und mein Alter und das
Alter der Welt, 1996*
(Your Age and Mine and the
Age of the World)
Emulsion, acrylic, shellac
and sunflower seeds on canvas
280 x 560 cm
Maxine and Stuart Frankel
Foundation for Art

Himmel auf Erden, 1998-2004
(Heaven on Earth)
Oil, emulsion and acrylic on
canvas with barbed wire
280 x 560 cm
Private collection

MA: Near the cover of the book is a black and white photograph of an Albert Speer building.

AK: Yes, but not a building. It was a very good art work that he made. He collected all the light projectors (Klieg lights) that the army used to spot enemy aircraft. They had a lot of them and he put them together and pointed them up to the sky. It's like a cathedral, but much higher. It's a wonderful idea.

MA: Do you think Albert Speer was a spiritual man?

AK: You don't have to be spiritual to get in touch with spirituality. It's easier but it is not always necessary. It can happen that someone who does not think about spirituality, does not consider it in his life, can get in touch with the spiritual through circumstances he is not responsible for or aware of. Speer was a very focused man. He created spaces that in different circumstances could be considered spiritual, but were not used for spiritual purposes.

MA: You have made reference to Speer's buildings in a number of your works. Does Speer represent something specific for you?

AK: Speer's architecture is interesting, but because of his connection to the Nazis he was not being discussed at the time I was using his images. There are many artists that run into trouble on their way to paradise, philosophers also: Marx, Hegel, Mao, Wagner. They have all looked for ways to find their place, their salvation through philosophy, art or religion.

MA: It seems to me that Speer's buildings were meant to intimidate, not just inspire. They were powerfully political churches.

AK: The church has always been political. This is nothing new. And politics can pose as religion. Hitler abused religion. His speeches were full of prayers. We know all of this, which is why we have to have some skepticism in our spirituality. Anyway, this Light Dome we were discussing by Speer—I think he wanted to make something very special for the Reich Convention, a political convention. And he made this very beautiful Light Dome. Maybe he was doing it for beauty or for politics. The situation of the artist is not pure.

MA: Could we go back and talk a little bit more about your education as an artist? You went to the university in Freiburg.

AK: Yes. But first I had the 19th century idea that the artist is a genius—that art comes out of him naturally and he doesn't need any education. I had always thought this, even as a child. You could say that I had too much admiration for artists. I thought they all came from heaven. Later I found out that an art work is only partly done by the artist—that the artist is part of a larger state of things—the public, history, memory, personal history, and he must just work to find a way through it all—to remain free but connected at the same time. Peter Dreher, an artist and professor in Freiburg, was very important for me in this way. I had come from law school and was trying to figure out the rules of this new world of art. Peter Dreher opened me to the freedom of this new world, to the milieu of the artist, and how to operate within this freedom. If you are a genius, you don't need a milieu. So I figured out that maybe I wasn't a genius. He said to me, "Do what you want." And then we could talk about it later. He helped me to understand that first you have to work and then you can talk.

MA: And later on you went to see Joseph Beuys, although you didn't officially study with him.

AK: No. I was living in the forest in Hornbach and had made some canvases. I had heard of Beuys and so I took my canvases to Düsseldorf to show him. He was impressive. I liked him very much. His dialogue was broad and he could be very impressive. He had a world view, not just the view of an artist. I think I appreciated him more because I had studied law.

MA: How so?

AK: Art just cannot live on itself. It has to draw on a broader knowledge. I think both of us understood that at the time we knew each other.

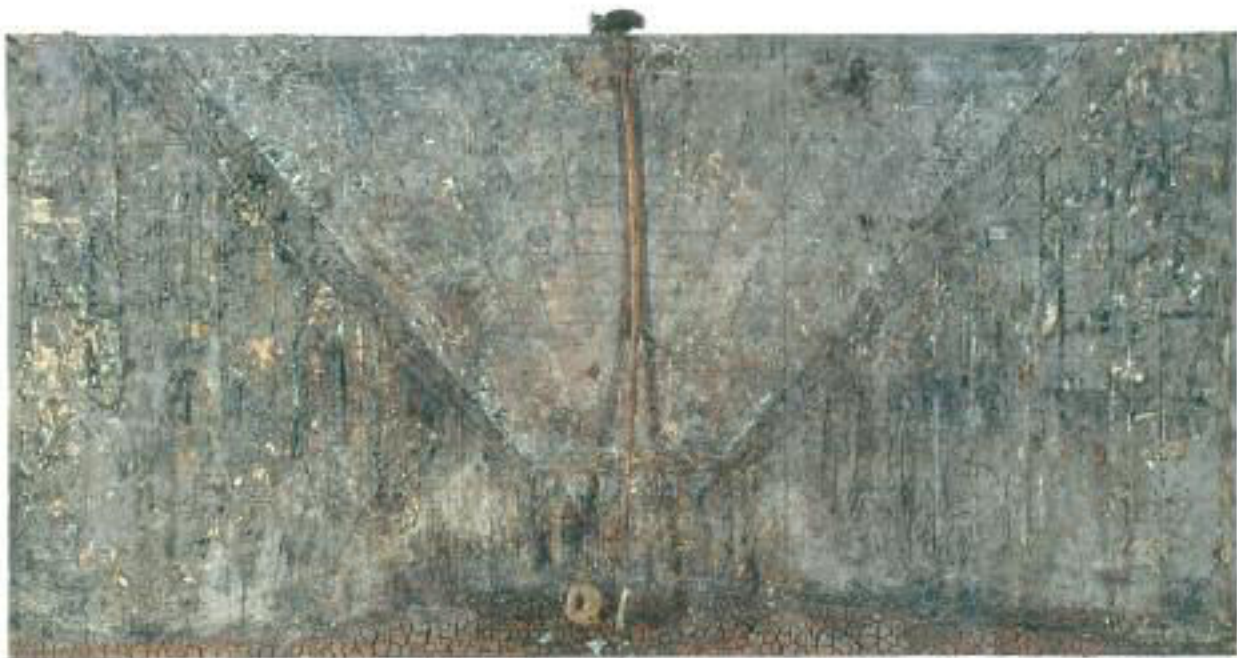
MA: Although I never met him, you and Beuys seem very different to me. He was more extroverted and you are more introverted, or at least less public.

AK: We were different, and as a young artist I needed to question that difference. Nevertheless, I learned a lot from him, even though he was not my teacher. I could talk to him about larger issues.

MA: In his interviews and writings, Beuys often evoked the word "spiritual." How do you think he meant that?

Elektra, 2005
Book, 29 double pages
Sand and clay on photographs
on cardboard
60 x 64 x 16 cm
Private collection





AK: That is complicated. We were both in Germany at a certain time—a time when a dialogue about history and spirituality needed to begin. It was difficult to separate the two subjects. There was a sense of starting over. To evoke the spiritual not only looking at ourselves but into the history of our nation. It was not just a matter of a critique. It had to be deeper than that. So yes, Beuys was a spiritual man. The artist is naturally spiritual because he is always searching for new beginnings.

MA: Your use of the artist's palette image in many of your works seems to suggest various roles for the artist, not always spiritual in his effect.

AK: The palette represents the idea of the artist connecting heaven and earth. He works here but he looks up there. He is always moving between the two realms. The artists are like the shamans, who when they were meditating would sit in a tree in order to suspend themselves between heaven and earth. The palette can transform reality by suggesting new visions. Or you could say that the visionary experience finds its way to the material world through the palette.

MA: Sometimes your palettes are on the ground, a part of the earth, which is constantly referred to in your work, as a painted image or the material ground for a painting.

AK: All stories of heaven begin on earth.

MA: Often the earth appears to be plowed or burnt or both. Many people see your landscapes as referring to battlefields.

AK: In some cases, that is true; but for me there is a larger metaphor. Plowing and burning, like slash-and-burn agriculture, is a process of regeneration, so that the earth can be reborn and create new growth toward the sun. Burning is a method to take out spirit. There is the alchemical reference to nigredo,¹ but it goes deeper than that. Burning is absolutely elemental. The beginning of the cosmos that we have conceived scientifically began with incredible heat. The light we see in the sky is the result of a distant burning. You might say heaven is on fire. But also our bodies are generators of heat. It is all related. Fire is the glue of the cosmos. It connects heaven and earth.

MA: Like fire, it seems to me that all of your images are symbolic mediators.

AK: Sure. Angels take many forms. Satan was an angel. We are not capable of imagining god in a pure state. We need symbols that are less pure, that include human elements.

MA: Like snakes.



AK: Yes. The snake can be an angel. It has played that role many times before in history.

MA: In a number of works you have referred to The Order of the Angels, and the concept of a celestial hierarchy. Is there a hierarchy to your symbols and the materials you use when you refer to this idea?

AK: No. There is no strict hierarchy to my images. They seem to be always evolving from one form or condition to another. This relates to the thinking of the Greek saint Dionysius the Areopagite. Do you know about the ideas attributed to him?

MA: The idea that heaven is organized in orders of different forms of angels?

AK: Yes—angels, archangels, seraphim, cherubim. More important was the concept that the spiritual realm is a spiral going up and down. So the spiritual realm is moving and twisting. This is important to the way I organize my pictures. I work with the concept that nothing is fixed in place and that symbols move in all directions. They change hierarchies depending on the context.

MA: An airplane propeller could be an angel or the spiral universe itself.

AK: Yes. And of course flying machines have played important roles in history, representing ambitions of transience or military power, from Icarus to moon rockets.

MA: I was also thinking about the different levels of spheres and subspheres in the kabbala that deal with the evolution or hierarchies between matter and spirit, and how that might relate to your use of materials. Your studios are warehouses of everything from dead plants and human teeth to sprawling stacks of lead. Are you suggesting a kind of symbolic ladder through your materials?

AK: Not that directly. I collect all of these things as I read and they find their way into my reconstructed stories, but I usually become attached to materials that have more than one side to their meaning. So they can be used to go up and down the ladder. Lead is a very good example . . . The large sheets of lead that support the *20 Years of Isolation* books are from the roof of a cathedral . . . Lead can transform itself in all directions.

MA: I've also noticed that many of your paintings can be turned upside down and still carry their message, as if the heaven and the earth just switch identities. It seems to me the orientation is only fixed when you write on the canvas.

Die Aschenblume, 1983-1997
(Ash Flower)
Oil, emulsion, acrylic paint,
clay, ash, earth
and dried sunflower on canvas
380 x 760 cm
Collection of the Modern Art
Museum of Fort Worth, Texas

*Papst Alexander VI: Die goldene
Bulle*, 1996
(Pope Alexander VI: The Golden
Bull)
Emulsion, acrylic and gold
leaf on canvas
330.2 x 555.6 cm
Collection of the Modern Art
Museum of Fort Worth, Texas

Melancholia, 2004
(Melancholy)
Oil, acrylic and emulsion on
canvas with glass
281 x 382 cm
Private collection

Am Anfang, 2003
(In the Beginning)
Oil, acrylic and emulsion on
canvas with polyhedron
190 x 280 cm
Private collection



AK: I work on my paintings from all sides, so when I am working on them there is no up or down. The sky can be reflected in the water or material can come down from the sky. That is part of the content of the paintings. Heaven and earth are interchangeable. The writing is an attempt to fix a moment or a place, to suggest a fixed state, but the imagery denies. It is active.

MA: Like the stars, galaxies and constellations you have been referring to—the Astral Serpent or the Milky Way.

AK: The title or language on my paintings is a starting point. The images should expand the meaning of the words. In *Die Milchstrasse*, I thought of the large cut in the land as a puddle of water. When the clouds are reflected on its surface it looks like milk. A puddle is a very simple thing, but it has the ability to reflect into something much larger. It could be the Pacific Ocean.

MA: On this canvas it looks monumental, but it also looks like a wound in the belly of the earth.

AK: Yes. It could be. When you dig into the ground, you may find something—water, a buried meteorite, a piece of heaven. These kinds of pictures are always operating between the macrocosmic and the microcosmic. The lead strings reach to the sky and then converge down into the funnel, which dips into the puddle. The Milky Way, which has been observed for millenniums as a great and expansive constellation, is really a small thing in the cosmos. It is like a puddle in the cosmos. Establishing a heaven and earth is a way to try to orient ourselves, but cosmic space does not understand this. It is all relative. What is big can in fact be very small. What is up can be down.

MA: It's like size versus scale in your work. Your formats vary tremendously, where size and subject can sometimes seem contradictory—making a monumental canvas for what you call a “puddle,” and then making a tiny book about heaven. The book *Die Himmel* is one of your smallest works.

AK: You cannot compete with heaven through size. The universe was once thought of as a large book. The human imagination creates its own heaven with things on earth.

MA: Books are clearly an important symbol for you; important mediators or containers.

AK: You know I did my first book when I was 10 or 11 years old. I'll show it to you [gets up to get a book high on one of his very tall bookshelves]. You see here I gave it the number 42 to indicate that it would be part of a large series. I must have been a bit pretentious [laughter]. As a young student, we were told to read a book and then write about the book, also making illustrations that would summarize the book from our memory. It was a very typical way of teaching in Germany. The book, the idea of a book or the image of a book, is a symbol of learning, of transmitting knowledge. The story of our beginnings always begins in the oral tradition, but eventually finds its way into the form of a book. This has its double side. It preserves memory, but it also makes the story more rigid. Everyone tells a story differently, but when it is written down it can become frozen.

MA: It's always possible to interpret the written word differently.

AK: Yes, of course. But as civilization progresses there seems to be less interest in interpretation and more of simply an acceptance. This is why the Gnostics were important. They questioned, interpreted and reinvented the story. We know very little about them except from later Christians who tried to dispel their questioning. But the questions continue to come. Science has not found our beginnings. The closest we can come to the beginnings are the old myths, the old stories. Questioning them keeps the story alive. I make my own books to find my own way through the old stories.

MA: When did you first become interested in the kabbala?

AK: I can't say for sure. Since childhood, I had studied the Old Testament, and sometime as a young man I began to read of Jewish mysticism. Then in the mid-1980s, I went to Jerusalem and began to read the books of Gershom Sholem. Beside the fact that kabbalistic stories and interpretations are very interesting, I think my attraction has something to do with the way that I work. People say that I read a lot, but in some ways I don't. I read enough to capture images. I read until the story becomes an image. Then I stop reading. I can't recite a passage, but I can recite it as image. For an artist it is important to have a strong, complex subject. Kabbala means “knowledge that has been received,” a secret knowledge; but I think of it as images that have been received. As I said before, the Christian church hardened in its knowledge and its symbolism at a certain point. The kabbalistic tradition is not one but many, forming a sophisticated spiritual discipline. It is a paradox of logic and mystical belief. It's part scholarship, part religion, part magic. For me, it is a spiritual journey anchored by images.



MA: Thinking of it as a journey, an image that has come to play a larger role in your art is that of the Merkawa—

AK: Of course, the chariot—the vehicle that rides to the throne of heaven.

MA: I think of the chariot as a kind of angel.

AK: It is more sophisticated than that. The image is that of a throne chariot of God, which could ascend and descend through the different heavenly palaces known as the Hechaloth — with the seventh or final palace revealing God. It comes from Ezekiel's vision of a mystical flight to heaven. But it is really a meditation tool. The kabbalistic mystics established a technique of using a chariot for a meditation tool. Using the chariot the mystics would make an inward journey to the seven palaces in their correct order.

MA: Here on the grounds of your home in Barjac, France, you are creating a monumental installation of stacked concrete rooms or “palaces” that go up hundreds of feet in the air, as well as a sprawling series of connected underground tunnels and spaces containing palettes, books and lead rooms. Are you working your way through the palaces of heaven?

AK: I follow the ancient tradition of going up and down. The palaces of heaven are still a mystery. The procedures and formulae surrounding this journey will always be debated. I am making my own investigation. You know this book the *Sefer Hechaloth* (Hechaloth Book)? Obviously, this is not just about travelling through palaces, but travelling through yourself in order to know yourself; the old saying *Erkenne dich selbst*.

MA: Recently you have made immense books the size of a human body that you can almost walk into with the pages covered with stars. But you have given the stars numbers and connected them with lines. These star drawings have also appeared in huge paintings that include observatories and what look like navigation instruments.

Die Milchstrasse, 1985-1987
(The Milky Way)
Emulsion, oil, acrylic
and shellac on canvas with
applied wires and lead objects
381 x 563 cm
Collection of the Albright-Knox
Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.



*Des Herbstes Runengespinst—
für Paul Celan, 2005*
(Autumns' Whisperings of
Runes—For Paul Celan)
Oil, acrylic and emulsion
on canvas with burned wood
280 x 380 cm
Private collection

AK: They are numbers given to stars by NASA scientists. Each number in the string of numbers indicates the distance, the colour, the size, etc. This is the scientific heaven. But of course it is all illusion. All of the constellations are illusions or ghosts. They do not exist. The light we see today was emitted millions, billions of years ago and of course their source was constantly changing, moving and dying. These lights we see, this heaven has nothing to do with our current reality. We are afraid so we have to make sense of the world. We cannot stand not to have a heaven in our minds. If there really was a heaven, it would exist outside of science or religion. I am speaking of religions, with the plural; not just a religion.

MA: So the scientists are making up their own dome of heaven.

AK: Of course. They want to find heaven too, but their stars are always moving, always dying, and some breaking off, making new stars. Scientists are a little bit like artists. Their stars are like pieces of memory that find their way into a painting. You pull them out and stop them for a moment in the painting. It is stopped only for the instant you recognize it and then you change position and you see something else, another relationship in the image, but again, only for an instant. There are only glimpses.

1. Lyndy Abraham's *Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* describes the nigredo as: "The initial black stage of the opus alchymicum in which the body of the impure metal, the matter for the Stone, or the old outmoded state of being is killed, putrefied, and dissolved into the original substance of creation, the prima material, in order that it may be renovated and reborn in a new form."
[<http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/04/harry-granger.htm>]

The Collection

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This new display of the permanent collection features a dozen remarkable works by ten artists who are well known on the international, Canadian and Québec scenes. Leading figures in their respective disciplines, these major artists—Anselm Kiefer, Paterson Ewen and Ron Martin (painting); Roland Poulin (sculpture); Jeff Wall, Arnaud Maggs, Angela Grauerholz and Roberto Pellegrinuzzi (photography); Gary Hill and Nam June Paik (video)—incorporate into the specific nature of a medium aesthetic and visual considerations drawn from the very sources of history and the human experience, at the same time as they challenge its defining qualities and manners. Alternately spare and spectacular, concise and lyrical, these highly substantial works take us literally right to the heart of things.

The pictorial material may be solid, meaningful and agitated (Martin), more rarefied, vaguely schematic and highly evocative (Ewen), or characterized by a dark, dense yet immaterial, sculptural polychromy (Poulin); paradoxically, however, the relative economy of colour, which is in keeping with a certain symbolic rigour, also emphasizes the excesses and extremes, while preserving the vibrancy of the works' impressions. In different ways, the photographic images of Grauerholz, Wall and Maggs interpret the major genres—landscape, staged and genre scenes, portraits: out of blurred or sepia images, striking isolation (of the person) and clinical repetition (of the face of Joseph Beuys), they create masterly, moving, sublime pictures. Offering its own tribute to Beuys, the assemblage put together by video art pioneer Nam June Paik succinctly transposes to canvas the immediacy of a media performance, an electronic image and traditional Asian statuary. As its title implies, Gary Hill's *Dervish* emanates from a gyrating device (like the whirling dervish turning round and round during incantatory rituals) that gives rise to a rapid, staccato sequence of images and sounds shattered in the throbbing darkness. The force of attraction and almost contemplative, but intense, nature of this imposing video installation find an unexpected echo, both current and transhistorical, in the utter serenity and extraordinary evocative power of Anselm Kiefer's painting *Die Frauen der Antike* (*Women of Antiquity*).

Josée Bélisle

Angela Grauerholz

Lessing, 1992

Chromogenic print, 2/2

161.5 x 244 cm

Collection of the Musée d'art

contemporain de Montréal

Gift

Photo: Courtesy of the artist

Nam June Paik

Untitled, 1989

Laser print on canvas, acrylic,
grease pencil and miscellaneous
objects

153.2 x 198.6 cm

Collection of the Musée d'art

contemporain de Montréal

Gift of Mrs. Esperanza Schwarz

Photo: Richard-Max Tremblay



Projections



Thomas Köner: Video Cycles, 2003-2005

(*anicca*), 2005

Thomas Köner's video works draw us into a temporal experience of exceptional poetic intensity. Köner made a much-noted entrance onto the video scene in 2004, with the creation of his first cycle of videos using thousands of images collected via the Internet—webcam pictures recorded by traffic surveillance cameras, intentionally devoid of all human activity. Working with the utmost patience, he condensed a whole day into a few minutes, juxtaposing the sequences in a continuum of moments that represents an experience of time and gives it shape: an instant of infinity.

There is neither confusion nor haste in Köner's work. Everything is calm, deliberate, palpable. Born in Bochum, Germany, in 1965, he is a musician and composer by training. Since his time as a student, he has devoted his energies to intensive sound research; he tends to avoid rhythm and melody, concentrating instead on the phenomenon of sound colour. He is recognized for his subtle treatments of sound, which he explores until he reaches that very brief, intense moment when it fully conveys its presence, "a presence of sounds which does not refer to anything, and not only allows but stimulates a complete awareness." His video work displays the same qualities.

In 2005, Köner began a second video cycle, *Périphériques*, the first part of which (*anicca*) earned him the ARCO Award for Best Young Artist. As part of its *Projections* series, the Musée is presenting these two video cycles by Thomas Köner, shown here for the first time in their entirety, from February 8 to March 5, 2006. In addition, on Wednesday, February 15, Köner will give a performance at the Musée, a film screening/concert to the film *Der müde Tode* by Fritz Lang.

Voyages: Montréal – Pays-Bas

Four concerts are scheduled for the Musée in conjunction with an event bringing together artists from Montréal and the Netherlands: two Dutch ensembles, Electra New Music and the Rosa Ensemble, and two Montréal ensembles, the Quasar saxophone quartet and Bradyworks.

Voyages: Montréal – Pays-Bas is the third instalment in *Voyages*, an international new-music exchange initiated by musician/composer Tim Brady, who is known for his commitment to the contemporary chamber music repertoire and to the electric guitar. Following previous editions spotlighting Ireland in 2002 and Switzerland in 2004, this year's event dedicated to the Netherlands will provide the opportunity for two Dutch groups to appear in Montréal, and for Quasar and Bradyworks to perform in that country.

The four concerts in *Voyages: Montréal – Pays-Bas* will take place on February 2, 3, 4 and 5, 2006 in the museum's Beverley Webster Rolph Hall.

Member News

As the museum evolves, so does the Foundation. To keep pace with the institution's expanding needs, it has made some changes and is introducing new membership categories, a new rate structure and a new image. Alongside the *Friends of the Musée* designation, we have added *Collectors*, *Donors* and *Patrons*. For both old and new categories, however, the philosophy remains the same, and has simply been refined.

For *Friends*, the rates are unchanged and continue to offer many advantages that make basic membership a compelling argument for joining the Musée. Membership in the new categories ranges from \$250 to \$5,000. To build dynamic support for its growth, the museum is appealing to young professionals who are art lovers. Grouped under the heading of *Collectors*, they will receive special communications and art-related information from the Foundation. *Donors* and *Patrons*, pillars who are essential to the institution's future, will enjoy intangible benefits such as public recognition. They will be called upon for their support on various occasions during the year, and will have privileged relationship with the Musée, personally overseen by the Chairman and the Director.

So come spring, keep an eye on this developing story and the new activities it brings—the story of a Foundation that is working to strengthen its links to its museum.

Jean Saucier, Chairman, Musée Foundation

The Musée Foundation



Photo: Himagia

Management News

Jean Philippe Bolduc, the Foundation's director since 2002, left us in September 2005 to take on new challenges. The Foundation thanks him for his diligent efforts throughout those years. In October 2005, Sylvie Cameron took over as director. Active in the cultural sphere since 1990, she holds a graduate diploma from Montréal's HEC and is currently completing her Master's thesis on museum management. The Foundation wishes her a warm welcome.

A New Boutique

New look, new approach: the Musée d'art contemporain reopened its Boutique just in time for the holiday season, with Jacinthe Vallée at the helm. The 180-degree layout allows shoppers to spot what they want at a glance: stationery, jewellery and watches, home accessories, toys, Musée-related products, and more. You are sure to find the right object for every occasion, age and budget in this original, appealing, artistic selection. All profits from the Boutique, which is now run by the Foundation, go towards enriching the Musée Collection through the acquisition of artworks. By shopping at the Boutique, you are then also supporting the museum and its artists.

Hours

The Boutique is open Wednesday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday to Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Access

Boutique of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 185 rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest (corner Jeanne-Mance), Place-des-Arts metro, tel.: (514) 847-6904



March Break, March 6 to 10, 2006

Enjoy a March break brimming with creativity, in a museum right in the heart of downtown. The imposing works of Anselm Kiefer will introduce participants to one of the most important figures on the contemporary art scene. Campers will discover a variety of techniques and explore the many different creative possibilities offered by mixed media. At the end of the week, family and friends are invited to the vernissage for the exhibition of images produced by the young artists.

Please note that the program is completely different from the summer day camp.

The March Break camp is intended for children aged 8 to 11.

Cost: \$184.04 (tax included).

The fees cover all materials required and daycare service from 7:30 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m., except Friday afternoon.

Meals and snacks are not provided (fridge and microwave oven available).

Space is limited.

You may register your child now.

The March Break day camp is in French only.

Information and registration:

Hélène Cantin

(514) 847-6239

helene.cantin@macm.org



Anselm Kiefer, *Sternenfall (Falling Stars)*, 1995
AN EXHIBITION ORGANIZED BY THE MODERN ART MUSEUM OF FORT WORTH

The Chairman of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Marc DeSerres, and the Director, Marc Mayer, along with the Chairman of the Fondation du Musée d'art contemporain, Jean Saucier, are pleased to invite you to the pre-opening of the exhibition

Anselm Kiefer *Heaven - Earth*

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2006 AT 6 P.M.
AT THE MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL
185 SAINTE-CATHERINE STREET WEST

TICKETS \$250

During the cocktail reception, guests will have an opportunity to visit the exhibition with a specialist on the work of Anselm Kiefer.

RSVP BEFORE FEBRUARY 1, 2006
Danièle Patenaude (514) 847-6234

Message from the Director

The first actual painting by Anselm Kiefer I ever saw was in 1984, when I was a student at McGill, in an exhibition at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. His work was already familiar to me from reproductions, but pictures in magazines often fail to adequately prepare you for the thing itself. I have been disappointed more than once by objects that had first pleased me as images. In the case of Kiefer, my initial reaction was certainly not disappointment, but it wasn't exactly pleasure. In fact, what I felt was closer to fear.

Like standing at the edge of a psychic precipice, this fear was not for my own physical safety, but rather for my innocence about art and its safe distance from life. With a natural predilection for the moot and the cerebral, I felt suddenly threatened by a painting that didn't so much depict a clump of dried sod as feign being one, and not just any. In this case, it was the patch of ground once soaked with the blood of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo; the blood of 48,000 casualties that nourished the flimsy poppies Kiefer scatters across the dry, greyish surface of his innocent and naïve-looking painting. Self-preservation made me walk away from the chilling object. I felt that it was trying to trick me into feeling something that had not been art's business for decades, into feeling the past. But I was inevitably drawn back for a longer look and it would haunt me for some time.

I have seen a great many works of art that attempted to conjure what Carl Jung referred to as "racial memory," but for me, Kiefer's are the most convincing. In the twenty-two years since I saw my first Kiefer, countless artists from around the world have taken their ethnicity as subject matter. But Anselm Kiefer manages to draw me so deep into his Germanness, and my own Frenchness, that ethnic specificity eventually breaks down to reveal a fundamental humanity. He remains the unrivalled master of an approach to art making that the term shamanistic does not quite convey because Kiefer does not practice magic, he makes art.

It gives me great personal satisfaction to present curator Michael Auping's outstanding exhibition of works by Anselm Kiefer to Montréal. In this special issue of the *Journal du Musée*, along with Paulette Gagnon's excellent analysis of the work, we have reproduced Auping's interview with the artist, which will give you a good sense of the intelligence and breadth of this extraordinary personality. Finally, you will notice that we have expanded our membership program. I urge you to support your Musée by becoming a member at a level that best suits you. Your membership gives us the means to serve you better with excellent exhibitions like this one and exciting acquisitions like the selection of works that we have taken out of storage to complement the Kiefer show. Your membership also sends a message to our governmental and corporate sponsors that a strong and dynamic Musée is important to you.

Marc Mayer

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