"Frontiers": Anselm Kiefer and the "Architecture of Memory"

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Abstract

Anselm Kiefer was born in 1945, in Germany, and his father was an officer of the Wehrmacht. This circumstance naturally determined his essence and motivated a course, a frontier. Kiefer, the painter who first studied law, literature and linguistics, has been orienting himself since 1990' for the study and plastic narration of antiquity and its most significant myths, namely in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Crossing borders - the essence of man, the secret of existence, history and art - Kiefer expresses, through his painting, his texts and his words, the confrontation with the collective memory.

Keywords: Anselm Kiefer, Painting, Frontiers, Antiquity, Memory.

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# "Frontiers": Anselm Kiefer and the "Architecture of Memory"

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"What does the artist do? He draws connections. He ties the invisible threads between things. He dives into history, be it the history of mankind, the geological history of the Earth or the beginning and end of the manifest cosmos"

Anselm Kiefer

# Three base points:

- 1- I do believe, as the Ancient Egyptians did, that the core of each of us is recognized in one's eyes. We can hide everything else, but it is almost impossible to hide the language of the "eye".
- 2- I do believe that nobody knows anybody. Each of us recognizes only a part of the
- 3- I do believe, as Kiefer does, that the world tends to push us to certain topics, determined places, specific people, nothing happens by chance.

In this paper, I begin from these three points, apparently contradictory in nature.

#### 1. The Man

Who is Anselm Kiefer?

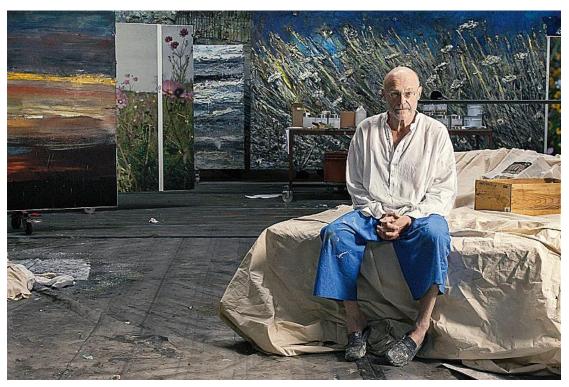
Anselm Kiefer<sup>1</sup> is a contemporary plastic artist, born in March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945 – a few months before the end of the Second World War – in Donaueschingen, a German city in the Black Forest. Since his father was an official of Wehrmacht - the unified armed forces of Nazi Germany - his infant years would be spent here, with his grandparents. In 1951 he finally reunites with is parents in Ottersdorf, where he begins his studies. From early times Kiefer shows a particular inclination to writing and drawing<sup>2</sup>, two talents that share the same targets - to see, to comprehend, to register - and that express themselves in solitude and isolation!

The surrounding environment of destruction, extreme misery and trauma that fell over a post-war Germany naturally marks his infancy and adolescence.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For a better understanding of the man and his work, vd. Arasse 2001, Matthew 2013, Bouhours

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Bouhours 2016, 234.

However, in 1963, the young Kiefer starts to publicly demonstrate his own merit, winning the Jean-Walter Prize, a scholarship that will allow him to freely pursue the travels of Van Gogh<sup>3</sup>, from Paris to Lyon, before his establishment in Arles. Van Gogh is the hero of the childhood of Kiefer.



**Fig. 1.** Anselm Kiefer in his studio in Paris. Copyright © 2013–2017 LAURA STEVENS | the drawing room.

Returning to Kiefer. In the year of 1965 he begins his university academic formation in the areas of law, literature and linguistic at the University of Freiburg, Germany.

During the next year he spends three weeks at the Dominican Convent of Sante-Marie-de-la-Tourette in Éveux<sup>4</sup>, a building projected by Corbusier and because of this stay he initiates his artistic studies at the Fine Arts Academy, with Peter Dreher, a German painter that would exert tremendous influence over an entire generation of painters<sup>5</sup>. In 1968 he installs his first atelier in Karlsruhe, where he comes to study, a year later, with Horst Antes at the Fine Arts Academy.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Van Gogh is a reference for Kiefer. McNay 2014. http://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/anselm-kiefer-retrospective-royal-academy-of-arts-london. (accessed February 20, 2018)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Bouhours 2016:234 and Auping 2005, 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The personal history of Dreher is even darker than the personal history of Kiefer. Both are sons of Nazi officials, but Dreher lost his father during the war and saw his house being bombarded. The tragedy of Nazism marked their personal histories and had, naturally, influence over the two men and their respective works.

In that same year, Kiefer makes himself noticed in the international artistic world, just by letting himself be photographed, in the major European cities, dressed in his father's military uniform, performing the Nazi salute. According to him, the motivation for this act provocateur was the so necessary and urgent need to raise awareness for the Nazi phenomenon that had become a taboo theme that nobody dared to mention.

Human actions always have multiple foundations and cannot be reduced to one, but I believe that what mostly motivated Kiefer in his defying act of the "Nazi Salutation" was the ambition to make him noticed and to call upon him the attention he craved. And naturally, he achieved that.

In February of 1970 Kiefer realizes his first individual exhibition in Karlsruhe and a year later, at the end of his studies, he sets himself up in an old school in Hornbach.

That same year he travels to Düsseldorf, to meet Joseph Beuys and present him some of his work. Joseph Heinrich Beuys<sup>6</sup>, a Professor and plastic artist, is considered one of the highest artistic references of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Kiefer ends up participating in several performances carried out by Beuys and his students.

It is after this point that his work starts being recognized, leading him to participate in important collective and individual expositions, first in Europe and, from 1982 onward, throughtout America as well.

In 1991, Kiefer abandons Germany, leaving behind his first wife and sons, and starts a new phase of work and study travels, passing Mexico, Guatemala, Korea and Japan.

After 1992, he settles in France, where he lives and works, in a space with twenty-five Hectares [61 Acres], called "La Ribaute", in Barjac, on the South, what some consider to be "the Total Work of Art" of Anselm Kiefer<sup>8</sup>.

The years of 1993 and 1996 are especially marked with new inspiring travels: to India, Japan, China, Pakistan, Nepal, Egypt and finally Morocco.

Since 2008 he resides in Marais, Paris, with his second wife, the Austrian Photographer Renate Graf and her two children and, in that same year, he acquires an old warehouse, where he starts to work, in Croissy-Beaubourg<sup>9</sup>, near Paris.

In 2009, he buys a Homestead in Portugal, in Carvalhal, where he usually comes on vacations and where he intended to install a new *atelier*, a school, an artistic residence and Museum. As is a common place, political and bureaucratic difficulties stopped the process.

In 2010 Kiefer is invited to be a professor in the Chair of "Artistic Creation" in the College of France<sup>10</sup>.

This is how life works. It writes itself in time, it throws roots and crosses histories...

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Cooke 1988, 557 and Biro 2003, 113–146.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Bouhours 2016, 238 ss.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Biro 2015, 68 – 75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Cohn 2012.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Vd. the inaugural lesson proffered by Kiefer 2011, 7-27.

## 2. The Life Work

What does Anselm Kiefer do?

The work of Anselm Kiefer has a *corpus* of: Painting, Sculpture and Environment Creation to which Kiefer calls "houses"<sup>11</sup>- Monumental sculptures with the form of towers with areas dedicated to the presentation of paintings and sculptures.

Still, what distinguishes his creation and what is going to transform him into an iconic figure are his works, namely his painting, over so many diverse matters and substances (*Materialbilder*). These productions, almost always of gigantic proportions, "in the Ramesside Fashion", impregnated with matter... sand, earth, leaves, soot, saliva, chalk, hair, ashes, trash, scrap and so on... while denoting an extraordinary sensibility to colour<sup>12</sup>, seize the spectator and seem to intimidate his own discernment<sup>13</sup>.

Yet, to me, what differentiates Kiefer in the whole of his work is, above all else, I concord, the painting itself. It is there that we can reach his art in a deeper way! "Kiefer makes painting an art of word and signs, a deposit of myths, a repertoire of icons" 14, affirms Leroux. I would go further and state: Kiefer makes History a privileged material of his own plastic language.

It is not by chance that his muses, the sources of inspiration, are the Catastrophe of History, the Trauma of the Holocaust, the Judaic Culture and Traditions<sup>15</sup>, particularly the Kabbalah<sup>16</sup>, the Mystic Philosophy of Robert Fludd<sup>17</sup>, the Ancient Cosmogonies – Egyptian and Sumerian – and the Great Epics<sup>18</sup>. But poetry is another one of his great sources of inspiration; one that he uses has a reference material in his plastic creations, often writing fragments of text on the surface of the canvas or on the sculpture itself.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>The "Houses", that usually have the form of sober formal pavilions, with an exterior covered with wavy iron and an interior with white walls, are built around a series of Works of art and the collectors can acquire the set. Besides this option of "production", in 2009, by the occasion of the commemorations of the twenty years of the Bastille Opera and departure of Gerard Mortier of its direction, the institution commissioned Kiefer the Conception of a musical spectacle with a recital, entitled *Am Anfang*, where he combined several arts: Scenography, scenarios and figurines of texts from biblical texts of the Old Testament and an Apocalyptic Vision of the end of World. Cf. Kiefer 2012.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Apparently, the paintings of Kiefer are grey in colour. However, the Materia with which Kiefer works adds colour to the painting.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> According to Kiefer they intent to evoke the disaster and destruction of the Second World War, mainly the Holocaust phenomenon.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Leroux 2006, 33 (Authors' translation).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Saltzman 2016, 50 − 59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Strasser 2000, Idel 2003. In 2000, Kiefer presents an exposition entitled "Chevirat Ha-Kelim", at the chapel of the Hospital of Salpêtrière, in accord with the principles of the basic concepts of the Lurianic Kabbalah. It is about five frames, which one refering to a phase of the creation of the world, according to Isaac Luria. In this regard, cf. Bouhours 2016, 29 ss.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Bouhours 2016, 196.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Cf. Ziolkowski 2011, 217, note 3.

From the 1980's on, Kiefer dedicates several series of works to poets as Paul Celan<sup>19</sup>, Ingeborg Bachmann<sup>20</sup>, Velimir Khlebnikov<sup>21</sup> among others.

In 2007, the exuberant and monstrous program *Monumenta* is inaugurated at the *Grand Palais*, à Paris<sup>22</sup>, with a work that pays homage to the poets Paul Celan and Ingeborg Bachmann, and to Céline<sup>23</sup> the "Dammed writer".

His work is kept in collections on the greatest museums on Earth: The Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Detroit Institute of Arts, in Michigan (both in the United States of America), and in Europe, The Albertina, in Vienna of Austria, The Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain, The Centre Georges Pompidou, in Paris and he was the second contemporary artist<sup>24</sup> to permanently integrate The Louvre Museum Collection, also in the French Capital.

At 24<sup>th</sup> October 2007, three of his works (Athanor<sup>25</sup>, a painting 11 meters high, *Danae* and *Hortus conclusus*, two sculptures) were included in Perennial Collection of this same Museum<sup>26</sup>.

At that occasion, The Louvre Museum took advantage of the inauguration to perform a series of cultural activities that lasted for a full month, conceived in close collaboration with Kiefer. The theme chosen by Kiefer – "Frontiers" - brought together several disciplines such as literature, contemporary music, dance, sciences, philosophy and art history<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> One of his most famous paintings "Margarethe", where he uses on canvas oils and straw, is inspired in the poem "Todesfuge" (Escape from Death) by Paul Celan. Cf. Lauterwein 2005. Important to note that Celan and Bachmann were extremely good friends.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Stiassny 2015. Bachmann as Kiefer lived the war experience as a child.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Furstenow-Khositashvili 2011, 90 ss.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Vd. Dagen 2007.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Furstenow-Khositashvili 2001, 88-89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> The first was Georges Braque in 1953.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> The work was placed in a staircase of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities of The Louvre Museum.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Bernadac 2007, 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> And it allowed expositions, for example, Exposition dessins/frontières/dessins; A solo dance -Walking The Line - designed, on purpose, for the event, by the American choreographer Bill T. Jones, accompanied by the Tibetan singer Jungchen Lhamo and the French percussionist Florent Jodelet; three concerts - Schönberg : Ein Stelldichein, pour clarinette, hautbois, violoncelle et piano; Webern : deux pièces pour violoncelle et piano; Pattar : Outlyer création mondiale, commande du musée du Louvre et du Festival d'Automne à Paris; Andre : Zum Staub sollst du zurückkehren, création française (Vendredi 9 Novembre à 20h); Bartók : Contrastes pour violon, clarinette et piano; Widmann: Sphinxensprüche und Rätselkanons pour soprano, clarinette et piano, création française; Sciarrino: Capricci pour violon solo; Pintscher: Study III for treatise on the veil pour violon solo, création française, commande du musée du Louvre, du Festival d'Automne à Paris et du Alte Oper de Francfort avec le soutien des amis du Alte Oper (Vendredi 16 Novembre à 20h) et Widmann: Troisième quatuor à cordes, La Chasse. Fantaisie pour clarinette seule; Mozart : Quintette pour clarinette et cordes en la majeur K 581(Vendredi 23 Novembre à 20h); a documentary of 26 minutes written and realized by Jean-Luc Perréard establishing a parallel between the life of the artist in Barjac and is relation with The Louvre and his paintings; spectacles of cinema/ music - « Duos éphémères »; Readings: Soirée consacrée à Fernando Pessoa; Conferences and Debates - Cycle of Conferences "Frontiers" with the presence

Throughout his life, Anselm Kiefer has won several prizes and distinctions: in 1983, The Hans-Thoma; in 1990, The Wolf; in 1997, The International Prize by The Jury of the 47 *a La Biennale di Venezia*; in 1999, The *Praemium Imperiale* [World Culture Prize in Memory of His Imperial Highness Prince Takamatsu]; in 2005, Officer of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany; in 2008, The Prize of Peace of The German Libraries; in 2009, The Gaulle-Adenauer and in 2011, The Berliner Bär, The Leo-Baeck-Meda and the Distinction of *Commandeur de La Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de La République Française*.

But then, why does his gaze still seem to want to escape the lens of the photographer?

He grows, he stands out from an immense crowd, yet... still he hides, he takes refuge in millenary Civilizations and searches for comfort in the voice of the poets...

# 3. The Engine of His Work

#### What was the engine of Kiefer?

### What drove him to this and not to any other way?

Anselm Kiefer is born in a Germany that is about to be brought to its knees and destroyed, after having written one of the most dark and sadistic pages of the Annals of Contemporary Human History. It most certainly would not have been easy to be the son of a Nazi officer and carry with oneself the weight of that inheritance. What to do? What could one do? Forswear the past? To hide it from the world for eternity? Or to transfigure it in some sort of philosophy, poetry and redemptive art that would allow him a reconciliation with the past and with the contemporary world and himself?

Kiefer realizes well that his biography is the "Biography of Germany". He is the product of the place where he was born, with all its constraints, its history and its cultural memory. Plus the men around him, probably, would never even allow him to forget that. He was a son of a Nazi Officer!

Only his clarity of mind made Kiefer follow the only sane and, ultimately, possible way. Firstly, for his own personal liberation and pacification regarding the trauma that Nazism must have represented to his generation, and secondly for the others around him; instead of judging him, they accept him, they lament and, finally, they consecrate him.

# "Master Stroke!"

In 1969 he challenges the world, he makes himself noticed, talked about when he is photographed making the Nazi Salute in some Main European Cities. From then on, diving in History, he transforms in his material per excellence, he starts to "re-establish" both himself and the emotions that History brings him. He leaves Germany. And doing so

of such characters as Johan Galtung, Chantal Mouffe, Alain Joxe, Boris Groys; Bruno Latour; Edgar Morin, among many others.

is to absolutely cut off with his past and roots, as he himself says: "Mon souhait était de faire une rupture d'ordre personnel"28.

From then on, the confrontation of the present with the collective memory becomes central in the work of Kiefer. The nostalgia for times past and the ancient cultures makes him awake the most ancestral human memory and will drive him to the Universe of Civilizations and mythologies as far away in time as those of the Ancient Orient, Egypt, Greek, the Old Testament and the Kabbalah.

Let's look at some examples...



Fig. 2. Departure from Egypt<sup>29</sup>, 1984 (The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles).

In this very impressive painting, of dark coloration and overly exaggerated perspective, Kiefer comes to remember the dark past of the Jewish People, using the ancient myth of the exodus of the Hebrews from the Egypt, narrated in the Old Testament. The Figure of Moses is evoked through a staff. But what we remember here is mainly the connection of the recent past, of Nazism, to the most distant past of Pharaonic Egypt. By connecting these two-time frames in History, Kiefer intends to redeem the German People of the atrocities of the Holocaust. He intends to liberate them of the trauma of the Nazism.

In 1987, Anselm Kiefer finished a great painting, whose title sends to the most important Egyptian myth, the Osiris Myth. Osiris is one of the most important Egyptians gods, the god of the afterlife and the dead, who was murdered by his brother Seth, who divided Osiris' body into 14 parts and dispersed them around the world. But Isis, his beloved wife and sister, "resurrects" him and so Osiris represents the god of transition, resurrection, and regeneration.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Laroche 2016, 64.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Vd. Christofinis 2014: 1-9. <a href="https://www.artslant.com/global/artists/show/15523-anselm-kiefer?page=1&tab=ARTWORKS">https://www.artslant.com/global/artists/show/15523-anselm-kiefer?page=1&tab=ARTWORKS</a> (accessed February 14, 2018)

This founding myth of the Egyptian Civilization is here portrayed by Kiefer, through a representation of a grave, a pyramid, to which is tied the dilacerated body of Osiris in 14 pieces of porcelain, that we can see standing out in white. Let's bear in mind that white was also a symbolic colour for death in ancient Egypt.



**Fig. 3.** *Osiris and Isis*<sup>30</sup>, 1985-1987 (Collection SFMOMA, San Francisco). (Vd. Licence <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/rocor/7158585191">https://www.flickr.com/photos/rocor/7158585191</a>).

The model of death and rebirth that consecrates the vision of cyclical time of Kiefer - and which is the model of salvation par excellence of Egyptian civilization - is here exhibited in all its greatness and supremacy. But this ancient story illustrates too the human capacity for evil, since Pharaonic times to the German history. And in this way, Kiefer's art represents a combination of past and present.



**Fig. 4.** *Man under a Pyramid*, 1996. (The National Galleries of Scotland and Tate). (Licence: https://www.flickr.com/photos/32357038@No8/5337091564).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Furstenow-Khositashvili 2001, 116-118; Johnson 2014: 955- 956 and Noble, Strauss, Osheim, Neuschel, Accampo. 2010, 877.

The reflection of Kiefer concerning the union of Man and the Universe is very well represented in this painting, which measures more than five meters long.

The Universe appears here symbolized in a pyramid, symbol of the Egyptian Civilization that made the analogy man/cosmos its redemptive message. As Kiefer asserts:

"Là, dans ce tableau, c'est moi, mais ce n'est pas seulement moi, c'est un gisant, un archétype. Ci-gît. Je suis un homme d'aujourd'hui qui a des souvenirs précis des temps anciens [...] Je suis ici, composé de tous mes souvenirs qui remontent jusqu'aux dinosaures et même plus loin. Le futur st lié au passé, mais pas mélangé à lui"31.

To Kiefer, the pyramid<sup>32</sup> is the perfect example of connection between the Earth and Sky. It announces the possibility of redemption after the "hell" of life, and the lying man illustrates the connection with cosmic times<sup>33</sup>.

*Man under a Pyramid* also symbolizes the supreme dialogue between body and mind one of the topics of Kiefer's "mental architecture".



**Fig. 5.** Fertile Crescent,<sup>34</sup> 2009 (Presently in Exhibition until August 2017 at The NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, United States of America).

DAD4W8/Alamy Stock Photo.

This work is part of a set of epic paintings that Kiefer presents for the first time at the White Cube Gallery, in London. The image transports the observer in time to one of the first civilizations of Antiquity, Mesopotamia, whose constructions are made of adobe. Because of this material, these constructions did not survive in time and become ruins, similar to those Kiefer knew in his infancy, in a dilapidated Germany.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Bouhours 2016, 212.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> The theme "pyramids" is presented in others paintings. See, far exemple, *Only with Wind, Time, and Sound [Nur mit Wind, mit Zeit und mit Klang]*, 1997 (The Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain). Cf. Arasse 2001, 268–74.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> It was already studied by Trindade Lopes, Almeida 2017, 1-8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Schama 2009.

So, it is in this mythical Universe, that we have just visited, where Kiefer finds an answer to its greatest anguish: that any destruction – and Auschwitz symbolizes the supreme destruction for a German born in 1945 – is succeeded by a creation! The apparent conflict between chaos and order, a cosmogonic model that he reclaims from ancient civilizations, will allow him a reconciliation with the world. The knowledge of these faraway knowledges, he also states, can offer to the modern men a reunion with nature and the Cosmic Universe<sup>35</sup>.

Therefore, it is here that we find the concept that is essential to Kiefer, the one he designates as "Frontiers":

"Quand je parle de frontières, je parle de notre essence même. Les frontières, c'est ce d'où nous venons, ce que nous sommes, ce qui va venir. Tout. Nous sommes la membrane entre le macrocosme et le microcosme, entre l'intérieur - ce que nous sommes et le dehors - ce que nous sommes aussi. Nous vivons de cela. L'interférence entre les deux est très complexe, c'est la vie même parce que nous sommes cet échange entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur. Et nous ne savons pas vraiment si nous ne sommes pas surtout composés du dehors. Je ne crois pas que la vie soit une entité bien façonnée, je pense au contraire que c'est un concept très fragile, dépendant autant de l'extérieur que de l'intérieur. La frontière définit le monde comme elle nous définit (...)"36.

(...) Mais la frontière, c'est aussi l'ambiguïté par excellence. La frontière nous est nécessaire, sinon nous ne pourrions pas vivre (...) Une frontière culturelle permet de développer son identité, mais si la frontière est trop rigide on meurt aussi. Sans influence de l'extérieur on n'est plus rien. Il nous faut donc de la frontière mais pas trop! J'utilise le mot « frontière » parce qu'il me permet d'englober tous les concepts, d'échapper aux définitions."37.

The most painful of all these frontiers is memory. Because it can recede, recede, recede... and dive, as it happened with Kiefer, in such distant Universes as culture and Jewish traditions, the trauma of the Holocaust, the ancient Cosmogonies – Egyptian and Sumerian – and naturally the voices of the poets.... Celan, Rainer Maria Rilke, Pessoa...

And to conclude what will never have a conclusion – because the work of real artists and those who are free spirits never has a beginning and never really has an end – the work of Kiefer consecrates him not only as a "painter of histories", but as someone that, like a God, announces and confers to himself a function: to create time and time again... This is his strength. It is so well represented in the almost violent form of how he uses his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> To Kiefer, the human body is a kind of microcosm that represents the attributes of the Universe.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> "Borders, in us, outside us, us" Interview with Anselm Kiefer by Terrasse, Jean-Marc director of the auditorium (excerpts) 2007, 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Cordellier 2008, 7. <a href="https://docplayer.fr/20758229-Anselm-kiefer-au-louvre.html">https://docplayer.fr/20758229-Anselm-kiefer-au-louvre.html</a> (accessed on February 16, 2018).

pictorial resources. Yet probably it is that same violence that affects and maintains us, as spectators, his captives.

I don't know if consciously or unconsciously, the work of Kiefer is a panting that aspires to relief, that so superior art of an Egyptian and Mesopotamian world, where he so profoundly dove to save himself...

It is here that all the frontiers are at play...

"There is no history. Each human being made his own history, has his own thoughts and his own world. But everyone is alone with his own illusions, with his own methods. I think each human being tries to put themselves in a bigger context. So you always create an illusion that you stay longer on earth than you do...That's what religion is. That's what the pharaohs did when they created the pyramids. They want—put themselves in a longer, longer context. So you get interested in geological times too. But it's much stronger. And then in cosmic times too. This reassures you to find a sense [meaning] in the world, because in the world there is no sense. So the scientific process, as science, doesn't lead us to any key to the world. The more we know, the more we don't know. It's always like this. So only mythology tried to get some coherent view. And, also, alchemy tried to explain the world in a coherent way, what science never can do."38

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> "Anselm Kiefer on Mythology and Human Experience," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art video, 1:30, October 2006,

http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/268

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