

GAGOSIAN

Gagosian Presents Anselm Kiefer's First Solo Exhibition in Athens



Anselm Kiefer, *Danaë*, 2023, emulsion, oil, acrylic, shellac, and gold leaf on canvas, 110 1/4 × 149 5/8 inches (280 × 380 cm)
© Anselm Kiefer. Photo: Georges Poncet

[Download Press Images](#)

I choose materials that have something to say to me: Ash, sand, lead, gold, etc. For me, these are selected things that have a spirit in them, which I bring out, make visible.

—Anselm Kiefer

ATHENS, June 17, 2024—Gagosian is pleased to announce Anselm Kiefer's debut solo exhibition in Greece. Opening on June 21, it features new and recent paintings, sculpture, and photography.

Kiefer's landscapes convey poetic responses to myth, history, and the natural world, evoking themes of creation, metamorphosis, and the cyclical nature of existence. These works are united by the artist's juxtaposition of the luminosity of gold with the visual and symbolic resonance of other mediums including oil and acrylic paint, shellac, straw, and fabric. Kiefer contrasts the materials' varying tonalities and textures to impart the sublimity of nature and the weight of history. He alludes to gold's allegorical significance by making reference to the metal's use in sacred icons and ancient legends, its alchemical symbolism in relation to lead (another key material in his practice), and the ideal of a "golden age."

Two paintings from 2023 titled *Danaë* interpret a myth that has inspired artists from Titian and Rembrandt to Gustav Klimt. The mythological figure of Danaë was imprisoned by her father, King Acrisius of Argos, in response to a prophecy that her son would kill him. Zeus circumvented her prison walls by transforming himself into a shower of gold, leading to the conception of Perseus. The first painting portrays Danaë's prison as an ancient tomb with a corbeled dome that Kiefer

encountered in Greece, surrounded by windswept foliage described by thick brushstrokes. The second recalls the act of transfiguration that is central to the myth, representing a row of black sunflowers on a gold ground with gold seeds that appear to fall down its surface.

Further exploring sacred and mythological themes in terms of landscape, *Cosenza* (2023) depicts an isolated rocky outcropping off the southwestern coast of Italy, rendering its rugged forms in vibrant gold, in contrast with the dark hues of the Mediterranean. *Spes Vana (Empty hope)* (2021) is a photograph printed on a gilded panel of a sculpture of a sunken naval ship taken at Kiefer's studio in France. Reminiscent of the shipwreck painted by German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich in his sublime arctic scene *Das Eismeer (The Sea of Ice, 1823–24)*, this work's striking golden ground reflects Kiefer's experimental approach to photography.

Nehebkau (1993–2023) is titled after an ancient Egyptian deity who took the form of a snake with human legs and served as a guardian of the underworld and binder of the *ka*, or vital essence of the soul. Inscribing hieroglyphics in the painting's upper register, Kiefer incorporates straw, terra-cotta, gold leaf, the sediment of a copper solution that has undergone electrolysis, and paint, juxtaposing material presence and motifs of transcendence. A sculpture housed in a vitrine, *Ignis sacer* (2014) contains scattered flakes of gold that read as a foreign substance among stalks of wheat. In addition to suggesting the sacred connotations of gold, the gold leaf symbolizes *Ignis sacer* (holy fire) or ergotism, a disease spread by a fungus that contaminates grain and causes mania, hallucinations, and death. Understood as divine punishment during the Middle Ages, the disease was widespread, with repeated outbreaks in the Rhine Valley. In addition to evoking the sacred, mythic, and historical, Kiefer's work addresses the complexity of humanity's relationship with nature, which both sustains and threatens life.

Kiefer's exhibition *Angeli caduti (Fallen Angels)* is on view at Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Italy, through July 21, 2024.

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); *Questi scritti, quando verranno bruciati, daranno finalmente un po' di luce (Andrea Emo)*, Palazzo Ducale, Venice (2022); and *La photographie au commencement*, Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut (LaM), Villeneuve-d'Ascq, France (2023–24). In 2017, he was awarded the J. Paul Getty Medal for his contribution to the arts.

#AnselmKiefer

ANSELM KIEFER

Opening reception: Friday, June 21, 7–9pm

June 21–August 24, 2024

22 Anapiron Polemou Street, Athens

Press

Gagosian

press@gagosian.com

Toby Kidd

tkidd@gagosian.com

+44 20 7495 1500

Vasso Papagiannakopoulou

vassopap@gagosian.com

+30 693 748 5660