

Artforum  
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GAGOSIAN GALLERY

# ARTFORUM

**Anselm Kiefer**

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View of “Anselm Kiefer: Morgenthau Plan,” 2013.

Foreground: *der Morgenthau Plan*, 2012–13. Background: *Von der Maas bis an die Memel, von der Etsch bis an den Belt (From the Meuse to the Memel, From the Adige to the Belt)*, 2012. Photo: Robert McKeever

GAGOSIAN GALLERY | 522 WEST 21ST STREET  
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May 3–June 8

“Morgenthau Plan” presents paintings and sculptures with a quintessentially Anselm Kiefer-esque repertoire of elegiac imagery molded upon scorched and densely processed surfaces. Here, fifteen large-scale canvases depicting barren expanses strewn with detritus, sparse stalks, and pastel-hued flowers—painted over enlarged photographs of blooming fields near the artist’s studio in southern France—stretch into an immersive continuum. The visual rhetoric of these monumental landscapes, evocative of an ideological past at the core of Kiefer’s critique yet infinitely bound to his psyche, has been central to his art since the 1970s, ever propelled by the artist’s cathartic reckonings with Germany’s haunted modern history. This show’s title refers to the 1944 proposal devised to enforce the industrial disarmament of post-WWII Germany by reducing it to an agricultural state; eventually un-instituted, it led the artist to contemplate the precariousness of oversimplified grand schemes. Yet the aesthetics of Kiefer’s painterly and symbolic scars remain largely familiar—in some places satisfyingly so, in others verging on literalism.

Of particular interest is *Von der Maas bis an die Memel, von der Etsch bis an den Belt* (From the Meuse to the Memel, from the Adige to the Belt,), 2012, a tempestuous seascape of gravitas and a monstrous presence, anchored near the gallery’s entrance. The nuanced combination of its massive frame—constructed from lead panels—and the ominous Romantic imagery results in a chilling sense of immediacy. Yet there is also an eerie luminosity: an incandescent emerald seeping through encrusted impasto layers that bypasses easy associations with Turner or Courbet and conjures instead Tintoretto’s *Christ at the Sea of Galilee*. The title of this new painting,

scribbled on a sleek plaque affixed to the frame's base, transcribes an obsolete stanza in "*Deutschlandlied*" (Song of Germany) that extols four rivers demarcating a much broader territory than the country currently encompasses. Its omission from the current national anthem potentially illuminates an undercurrent that traces back to "Occupations," 1969, Kiefer's early series of staged photographs in which he struck Nazi salutes against monumental or natural settings—one of these a seascape.