

## GAGOSIAN

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### Anselm Kiefer Sculpture Will Go Up at Rockefeller Center

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*A detail of Anselm Kiefer's "Uraeus" (2017-18), which will go on display at Rockefeller Center in May. Credit Georges Poncet/Gagosian, Public Art Fund, and Tishman Speyer*

Anselm Kiefer, the German artist known for his monumental paintings and installations layering history, culture, religion and mythology, will create his first ever site-specific outdoor public sculpture in the United States this spring at Rockefeller Center in New York.

The piece, commissioned by the Public Art Fund, will open on May 2. “An artist of his stature — you almost don’t think to even ask,” said Nicholas Baume, the fund’s director and chief curator.

After initiating a conversation in 2010, Mr. Baume spent several years scouting locations across New York with Mr. Kiefer, now 73 and based in France, before the artist decided on the well-trafficked spot just off Fifth Avenue at the head of the Channel Gardens — with a backdrop of 30 Rockefeller Plaza and diagonal to St. Patrick’s Cathedral.

“Kiefer’s work is very much about the mythic, and Rockefeller Center — borne out of the ashes of the Depression — has that dimension,” said Mr. Baume.

For this sculpture, Mr. Kiefer has cast in lead a colossal open book, carried aloft by eagle’s wings spanning 30 feet. This will be supported by a 20-foot-tall column, encircled by a snake with its head erect and tongue hissing at the book. A number of other giant lead books will be strewn on the ground at the base of this theatrical tableau.

The piece is obscurely titled “Uraeus,” referencing the upright form of the Egyptian cobra associated with the serpent goddess Wadjet and used as a symbol of power on the crowns of the pharaohs. But the work, evocative of both a lectern and an altar, is open to multiple readings.

“Does the snake represent power or danger?” asked Mr. Baume. “It can be both an auspicious symbol in many cultures and something we have an instinctive fear of. Of course the book itself is the centerpiece of the work at a moment in our cultural history where books are under deep assault — both the commercial enterprise of book publishing and book reading and of course just the whole idea of truth and knowledge.

“Those are all things,” he added, “that resonate differently than they might have 20 years ago in relation to Kiefer’s work.”