

Visual Arts Extended Essay

Topic: Understanding Anselm Kiefer

Research Question: To what extent is Anselm Kiefer a lone art practitioner or a part of modern German art practices as present in the work of Joseph Beuys and Georg Baselitz?

Word Count: 3942



Anselm Kiefer - Bohemia Lies by the Sea
1996, Medium: Oil, emulsion, shellac, charcoal, and powdered paint on burlap¹

¹ "Bohemia Lies by the Sea | Anselm Kiefer | 1997.4ab | Work of Art | Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History | The Metropolitan Museum of Art." *The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2017.

Table of contents

Introduction	3
Anselm Kiefer	6
Joseph Beuys	10
Georg Baselitz	19
Conclusion	25
Figure List	27
Bibliography	28
Appendix	32

Introduction

Anselm Kiefer was born on March 8, 1945 (age 72), Donaueschingen, Germany, in the final year of the Second World War. He is a painter and sculptor whose art often involves post war themes including German Mythologies, Jewish influences (often related to the Kabbalah) and memories of the German culture and history. Although Kiefer did not experience The Holocaust first hand, he gathers evidence from various sources including books, people and previous artwork, to produce his work.

Containing various themes, Kiefer's work is often described as being unable to be categorized and he often falls between different art movements and different art disciplines in a way similar to fellow artist, Rodin. For this reason, Kiefer and Rodin are showcased together at the 'Musée Rodin'. The presentation of the exhibition describes their unique style. "Installed in the exhibition hall, the exhibition will demonstrate the unusual convergence of these two giants, shaped with freedom and liberated from all artistic contingencies."² As the basis of this, this essay looks at the question: To what extent is Anselm Kiefer a lone art practitioner or the result of the modern German art movements as present in the work of Joseph Beuys and Georg Baselitz?

Often, Kiefer is classified as a lone art practitioner, unable to be linked to other art movements and artists, however, the findings demonstrated in this essay question this

² "Kiefer Rodin." *Kiefer Rodin | Rodin Museum*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Oct. 2017.

claim by comparing his work to that of other modern German artists: Joseph Beuys and Georg Baselitz.

The exhibition at 'Musée Rodin' in Paris sparked this discussion, and then brought about the question. As a basis for my research and methodology, I did extensive secondary source reading. Most of the sources consulted were academic texts and publications from the past twenty to thirty years, found using EBSCO. In order to broaden my understanding of Kiefer's work, I read the book 'Anselm Kiefer' by Daniel Arasse published in January 13, 2015. Additionally, whilst researching, it was possible to get a meeting with Anselm Kiefer in his visit to Portugal, where I visited his studio and deepened my understanding of his work. In continuation, I contacted various galleries and curators in hope of finding more answers and opinions about the categorisation of Kiefer's work. However, I found that none of them felt that they were comfortable enough to discuss this. This could possibly be because of the argument of the difficulty of categorising Kiefer's work.

The validity of the essays referred to throughout my exploration is restricted. Many times, these publications are biased as they only provide one of the views to different arguments about Kiefer's work. For example, in the exhibition 'Kiefer Rodin' mentioned previously, only a section of Kiefer's work is showcased, restricting the viewer's understanding of the true essence and ideas present in Kiefer's entire body of work. For this reason, in this essay, I will aim to contradict the ideas put forth by the Rodin Musée,

showing that Kiefer is, in truth, “liberated” from the boundaries and limitations of media, processes and art forms.

Anselm Kiefer

Encompassing various themes, Kiefer's work is often said to be difficult to categorise. Kiefer does not only refer to various ideas, he also uses different media, including performance, sculpture and painting. This debate is addressed by various galleries and essays like the 'Kiefer Rodin' exhibition in the 'Musée Rodin' in Paris. Here, some of the works of both artists is showcased and said to be hard to categorise "Drawn by the accidental, open to chance, they exploit all domains, manipulate all materials, heading off the beaten path and allow themselves a myriad of arrangements and daring transformations. Anselm Kiefer produces a series of entirely unprecedented displays. The artists takes it all in, absorbs and digests it to create new forms."³



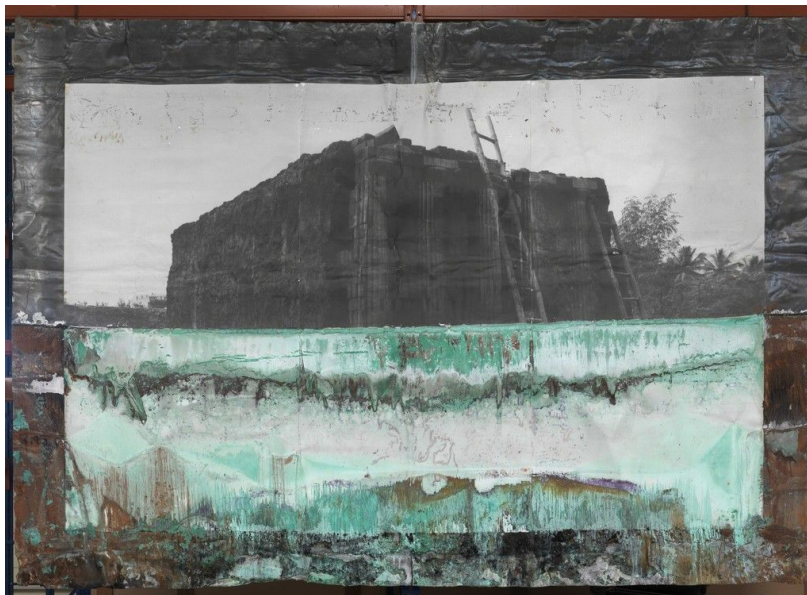
Anselm Kiefer 'Der Fruchtbare Halbmond - La Mezzaluna Fertile, 2012'⁴

³ "Kiefer Rodin." *Kiefer Rodin | Rodin Museum*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2017.

⁴ Rumma, Lia. "ANSELM KIEFER "Der Fruchtbare Halbmond - LA MEZZALUNA FERTILE"." *Lia Rumma | Artsy*. N.p., 06 May 2014. Web. 28 Oct. 2017.



Anselm Kiefer - For Segantini: die bösen Mütter (For Segantini: The Bad Mothers), 2011-2012. Oil, emulsion, acrylic, shellac, wood, metal, lead, and sediment of an electrolysis on canvas. 280 × 300 × 54.9 cm⁵



Anselm Kiefer - *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, 2012. Electrolysis on photographic paper on lead. 307 × 440 × 4 cm⁶

These three works are all recent, include various different themes and use a variety of materials. When his works are studied, people sometimes find them hard to categorise,

⁵ "In Past Show Anselm Kiefer: Transition from Cool to Warm at Gagolian." *Anselm Kiefer | For Segantini: Die Bösen Mütter (For Segantini: The Bad Mothers) (2011-2012) | Artsy*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Sept. 2017.

⁶ "In Past Show ANSELM KIEFER "Der Fruchtbare Halbmond - LA MEZZALUNA FERTILE" at Lia Rumma." *Anselm Kiefer | The Shape of Ancient Thought (2012) | Available for Sale | Artsy*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Nov. 2017.

due to their different qualities. The first image, 'Der Fruchtbare Halbmond - La Mezzaluna Fertile' is, according to the art gallery, 'Mia Rumma,' "A stunningly imaginative, eloquent project which reveals an extraordinary wealth of underlying cross-references, with all that they evoke and the diversity of artistic means used to express them."⁷ This piece is very different to Kiefer's paintings, as it is a very abstract sculpture. It is due to pieces like this one that the audience may have trouble classifying his work. When it is compared to other works, like for example, 'For Segantini: The Bad Mothers' or 'The Shape of Ancient Thought' (shown above), the pieces seem very different. First, the media used in each work is varied, as well as the colours, the mood and the scale. If analysed in depth, however, the pieces have concurrent themes and similar elements. They all include, for example, elements from Kiefer's life that are connected to the themes present in each piece. In his work, Kiefer continuously embeds materials to emphasise certain ideas and themes.

Kiefer's constant thought process and development of new pieces emphasises the broad ranges of media he explores in his body of work challenges the way his audience categorises his work. He not only explores by painting, he moves on to large scale books, performances, small sculptures and large ones: as big as buildings, as commented with him in his interview. He not only changes the media of his pieces but also the scale, "When I did the paintings for the Bilbao, the paintings I made, the size of this wall, were too small."⁸ After almost 40 years in his artistic profession, Kiefer used

⁷"Der Fruchtbare Halbmond - La Mezzaluna Fertile, 2012 – Liarumma." *Liarumma*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Oct. 2017.

⁸ Appendix 1

performance art for the first time (in the series Heroic Symbols) the artist comes back to this form of art to convey his thoughts. "Whenever artists have become discontented with conventional forms of art, such as painting and traditional modes of sculpture, they have often turned to performance as a means to rejuvenate their work."⁹ Kiefer rejuvenates his work by recycling media and coming back to themes he once focused on and explored in great depth.

Despite the fact that his works are very diverse, when one looks back at the beginning of his art practise, some links between his work and the work of other German artists can be found. These connections may suggest that Kiefer's work was influenced by other artists, making it easier to classify. For example, one of the reviews of the painting shown above, 'For Segantini: The Bad Mothers', comments: "Revealing the influence of his tutelage under Joseph Beuys, Kiefer's epic-scaled, dense sculptures and paintings are often exposed to elements like acid and fire, and incorporate materials such as lead, burned books, concrete, thorny branches, ashes, and clothing; famed critic and historian Simon Schama has described his work as "heavy-load maximalism."¹⁰ In his present art practice, his work is very diverse, making it confusing and hard to categorize; however, looking back at what shaped the beginning of his work may be the key to find out what it is all about.

⁹ "Performance Art Movement, Artists and Major Works." *The Art Story*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Oct. 2017.

¹⁰ "In Past ShowAnselm Kiefer: Transition from Cool to Warm at Gagosian." *Anselm Kiefer | For Segantini: Die Bösen Mütter (For Segantini: The Bad Mothers) (2011-2012) | Artsy*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Oct. 2017.

Joseph Beuys

Joseph Beuys was an artist born in the midst of the Nazi regime, in 1921, Krefeld, Germany. He was a performance artist, sculptor and “A major figure of the postwar German avant-garde”¹¹. As Beuys was born in a time when the Second World war had not yet finished and lived his childhood surrounded by such events, his art often involves themes and motifs linked to the times and sentiments of war. As a teenager, Beuys was obliged to join the Hitler Youth movement, where he understood more about the Nazi mentality. After an accident suffered when his battle plane was shot down, Beuys claims to have been “promptly rescued by a nomadic tribe of Tartars, who apparently saved his life by greasing his bruised and battle-weary body with animal fat, before wrapping him entirely - so as to raise his temperature - in felt.”¹² This event eventually played an important role throughout his artistic career; many of his installations involve materials like flesh and bones. His performances, involving intellectual use of language, like ‘How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare’ (1965), also made the artist involved in teaching and lecturing. “Beuys counted debate and teaching as part of his art and was a leader in many socioeconomic reform movements.”¹³

When comparing the works of Anselm Kiefer and Joseph Beuys, some similarities can be identified, both in the media and the themes within the pieces. There is a clear

¹¹"Joseph Beuys." 131 Artworks, Bio & Shows on Artsy. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Oct. 2017.

¹²"Joseph Beuys Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works." The Art Story. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2017.

¹³"Joseph Beuys." 131 Artworks, Bio & Shows on Artsy. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Sept. 2017.

resemblance between the artists' early performance art. In the essay 'Technical College Aachen, 20 July 1964', an essay that talks about the similarities in the works of the artists, the author comments: "In their confrontation of the Nazi legacy both used performance art to yield certain social, political and psychological effects that they believed would contribute to coming to terms with this past."¹⁴ The picture shown below was taken five years before Kiefer left on his project entitled Heroic Symbols. It is a picture taken of Joseph Beuys by one of his students, showing him with a bleeding nose and raised arm during a performance. During this performance, entitled, *Model Fat Corners* (at the Fluxus Festival of New Art), the audience grew "increasingly agitated when confronted with this aggressive transgression of what was an ethical-moral and political taboo in post-war Germany, namely the public dissemination of Nazi propaganda".¹⁵ It is, therefore, clear that the presented taboo themes in his performance were expressed to trigger a response from the audience.

¹⁴Abdullah, Hannah. "Kiefer and Beuys: Cathexis and Cartharsis." *Tate*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2017.

¹⁵Abdullah, Hannah. "Kiefer and Beuys: Cathexis and Cartharsis." *Tate*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2017.



Joseph Beuys - Heinrich Riebesehl - photographed during his performance- Model Fat Corners at the Fluxus Festival of New Art Technical College Aachen, 20 July 1964 ¹⁶



Anselm Kiefer
Heroic Symbols (Heroische Sinnbilder) 1969
Photograph, black and white, on paper. Tate and National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh¹⁷

As well as Beuys, Kiefer expresses certain Ideas through performance art. In the series 'Heroic Symbols', Kiefer took a series of photographs and exhibited them in a specific order, starting in his studio and later moving to various locations across Europe. In these different locations,

¹⁶Abdullah, Hannah. "Kiefer and Beuys: Cathexis and Cartharsis." Tate. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Oct. 2017.

¹⁷Tate. "'Heroic Symbols', Anselm Kiefer, 1969." Tate. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2017.

Kiefer photographed himself doing the Sieg Heil as a representation of the events that occurred during WW2. "On each occasion numerous photographs were taken, some with only slight shifts in viewpoint."¹⁸ Similarly to Joseph Beuys, Kiefer's photographs were evidently created to provoke a response from the audience as they focus on a taboo subject present in the action performed. In the case of this photographic collection, Kiefer expresses his ideas by trying to live the events he is exploring in first hand. Similarly to Beuys, Kiefer refers to the controversial issues faced during The Holocaust, shocking his audience with intentions of evoking a reaction. In the essay 'Kiefer and Beuys: Cathexis and Catharsis, Hannah Abdullah writes "Kiefer's re-enactment of the Nazi salute directly confronts the viewer with German responsibility for the horrors of the Second World War."¹⁹ The similarities between the two pieces shown above are clear both in terms of their aesthetics and their content. In both images, each respective artist is present doing the Sieg Heil. Both Kiefer and Beuys capture a moment where they were in the middle of a performance and, in both images, the artists evoke a response from the audience by exploring taboo subjects and actions.

Even though there are some similarities between Kiefer's work and Beuys, both in the themes and media used by the artists, there is one main difference in their art practice. As one can learn from his pieces, Beuys' art is a representation of moments he has already, ones he aims to recreate to the audience in hope that they will understand his observations and inner thoughts. This differs from Kiefer's compositions, which are

¹⁸ Weikop, Christian. "Occupations / Heroic Symbols." *Tate*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 Oct. 2017.

¹⁹ Abdullah, Hannah. "Kiefer and Beuys: Cathexis and Cartharsis." *Tate*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2017.

recreated moments he has never lived, as he never experienced the holocaust first hand; ones whose information has been provided to him through various sources: family members, books and visual representations including photographs or art created by other artists."Kiefer staged photographs of himself in paramilitary costumes, at times in Romantic-style landscapes throughout Western Europe." ²⁰ This is evident in the images above, where Beuys is photographed in the middle of an ongoing riot and Kiefer is by himself in a field, recreating a moment. Evidently this does change the way in which the different pieces are appreciated as the impact Beuys had on the audience was instant, and he then captured those moments with photographs, whilst Kiefer tried to evoke a response by exhibiting the moments he recreated by himself.

The links found between the pieces are not as obvious. Instead of being visually similar, as the two images discussed earlier, the links between the pieces involve the fact that they both include elements from the outside world linked to The Holocaust. For example, in 'The Pack' by Joseph Beuys and 'The Women of the Revolution' by Anselm Kiefer, (shown below), both artists incorporate materials used in the war with a new purpose.

²⁰ "Anselm Kiefer | Untitled (Heroic Symbols) | The Met." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, I.e. The Met Museum*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2017.



Joseph Beuys, *The Pack (das Rudel)*, 1969. Volkswagen bus made in 1961, 24 sleighs, each equipped with fat, felt, blankets, belts, and torchlight. 200 × 400 × 1000 cm²¹



Anselm Kiefer, *The Women of the Revolution (Les Femmes de la Révolution)*, 1992 Lead beds, photograph on lead²²

²¹"Joseph Beuys | *The Pack (das Rudel)* (1969) | Artsy." Artsy - Discover, Research, and Collect the World's Best Art Online. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Oct. 2017.

²²"In Current Show Anselm Kiefer at MASS MoCA." Anselm Kiefer | *The Women of the Revolution (Les Femmes De La Révolution)* (1992) | Artsy. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2017.

In the case of Joseph Beuys, the artist places various sleighs leaving a Volkswagen bus. “ Each sledge carries a survival kit made up of a roll of felt for warmth and protection, a lump of animal fat for energy and sustenance, and a torch for navigation and orientation.”²³ For him, this piece is part of a healing process he has to go through with regards to The Holocaust. “Perhaps even more important, the sleds are *exiting* the bus, not being towed by it, as at first it may seem. This suggests that each sled is an independent and sentient entity, here released (or born) into the wild to find others in need of rescue.”²⁴ The use of sledges and the survival kit is directly linked to war as it was how injured soldiers were removed from the battle. The sledges in the piece can also be viewed as a fleet of dogs, “ Twenty-four sledges, resembling a pack of dogs, tumble from the back of a VW van”²⁵, something that is also reinforced in the title. This reference reinforces the element of freedom present in the piece. In the case of Anselm Kiefer, the artist places beds in a room to represent the “Women of the Revolution. The beds are given another meaning by the way they are set up.” “And when viewed from above, the beds in *The Women of the Revolution* seem to represent not only the places where bodies might rest, but also, applying a radically different sense of scale, a landscape. The shift is unavoidable as each bed’s central cavity seems no longer to represent the imprint of a revolutionary woman’s body but instead records a desert crater, bomb site, or blasted heath.”²⁶

In both cases, the artists use objects that are used for obvious purposes in our daily

²³ Tate. “Joseph Beuys: Actions, Vitrines, Environments: Room 6 '.” Tate. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Nov. 2017.

²⁴ “Joseph Beuys Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works.” The Art Story. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2017.

²⁵ Tate. “Joseph Beuys: Actions, Vitrines, Environments: Room 6 '.” Tate. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2017.

²⁶ “Anselm Kiefer at Mass MoCA.” DAILY SERVING. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2017.

lives to represent the people who used them. In neither of the pieces are these people present, but what they are going through in the moment is suggested by the objects and the way they are exhibited.

Joseph Beuys belonged to the avant garde artist network Fluxus; "Fluxus artists did not believe that one must be educated to view and understand a piece of art."²⁷ Fluxus artists often believed that the categorisation of art was too formal and limiting, making it hard to define. Inside this movement, as discussed earlier, Beuys expressed his ideas through performances and sculptures and his avant-garde work often involved political and social dimensions to it. It is the Avant Garde aspect of Kiefer's early performance art, that shows the influence Joseph Beuys' creative work had on him; it is certain that his own pieces can be linked to this movement. Kiefer's link to this movement due to performance and later due to his use of natural elements, used to link the scene portrayed to a real life moment, hugely affect the audience as this experiences enables every individual to have a conversation with the piece, understanding the themes and ideas explored in it and by it in more depth. Similar to Beuys, Kiefer also uses performance art to explain concepts that are hard to understand or communicate. The connections between Kiefer's early art practice and Beuys' is clear and even though Kiefer's present work has developed further, the resemblance shows that in fact, Kiefer is not a loner art practitioner, but in fact, a result of the influences of modern artist, Beuys.

²⁷ "Fluxus Movement, Artists and Major Works." The Art Story. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2017.

Georg Baselitz

Georg Baselitz was a German painter, printmaker and sculptor born in 1938 as Hans-Georg Kern in Deutschbaselitz, Germany. Baselitz was a very important German artist as he inspired the rise of Neo-Expressionism²⁸. His work involves post-war themes due to his first hand experience of the Second World War. Figures are wildly represented in his body of work, generally distorted to represent the highly shaped generation after the events of the Holocaust; sometimes, these figures are portrayed upside down to reinforce confusion and disorientation of the German community after the events of The Holocaust. Many times, Georg Baselitz diverged from the classical painting styles that were used in his time to communicate messages to the audience more effectively. "Rather than delight in the lush effects of oil paint, his handling sometimes suggests awkward scratches and smears, an effect which compounds the anguish of the figures he depicts."²⁹ This trait in his art practice is also common in Kiefer's body of work; both artists often create pieces with distorted figures or images to evoke the suffering present in WW2.

²⁸ "Georg Baselitz Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works." *The Art Story*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Nov. 2017.

²⁹ "Georg Baselitz Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works." *The Art Story*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Nov. 2017.



Georg Baselitz
Große Nacht im Eimer (Big Night down the Drain)
1962–1963, Oil on canvas, 185 x 165 cm³⁰

‘Die Grobe Nacht im Eimer (Big Night down the Drain)’, (the image shown above) a piece produced by Georg Baselitz in 1963, represents a deformed young boy that appears to be holding an exaggerated phallus. The imagery represented in the piece and the message it transmits make this piece one of his most controversial works of art. The clothes worn by the figure represent the uniform worn by the Hitler youth.³¹ When the piece was showcased for the first time, it was arrested by the authorities due to its pornographic contents.³² “This confrontation with ugliness was something he believed was necessary to confront the violence of twentieth century history.”³³ Similarly to Kiefer’s photographs of the series “Heroic Symbols”, Baselitz provokes a response from the audience, forcing them to reflect on the piece they are commenting on.

³⁰ "Große Nacht Im Eimer (Big Night down the Drain)." Haus Der Kunst. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Oct. 2017.

³¹ "Große Nacht Im Eimer (Big Night down the Drain)." Haus Der Kunst. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2017.

³² "Große Nacht Im Eimer (Big Night down the Drain)." Haus Der Kunst. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2017.

³³ "Georg Baselitz Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works." The Art Story. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Oct. 2017.

In this piece, Baselitz links the boy to the theme of war by adding the small detail of the shorts that not everyone might notice, Kiefer does a similar thing in certain photographs from the series 'Heroic Symbols'; an example of this can be the image presented below, where Kiefer presents himself wearing a dress with aims of juxtaposing the action he is performing, reinforcing the action. "Such sinister associations are dispelled by the absurdity of Kiefer looking like an unkempt hippie peace activist"³⁴ Both artists link the pieces to similar motifs, generally focusing on post-war themes. They do this by adding subtle symbols in their compositions, forcing the audience to analyse the piece in order to understand it fully.



Anselm Kiefer
Heroic Symbols (Heroische Sinnbilder) 1969
Photograph, black and white, on paper
Tate and National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh³⁵

Georg Baselitz and Anselm Kiefer showcased their work together in a collective exhibition at The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. The exhibition explored "the legacy of German Expressionism in Postwar and Contemporary art by bringing together major works spanning the last hundred years." Both works are "remote, full of symbols

³⁴Weikop, Christian. "Occupations / Heroic Symbols." Tate. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2017.

³⁵ Tate. "'Heroic Symbols', Anselm Kiefer, 1969." Tate. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2017.

and allusions, their work creates an atmosphere which is somewhat heavy, even spectral at times.”³⁶ Both artists express their ideas in paintings by portraying different figures and objects that allude to the Holocaust. In order to broaden their artwork spectrum, they beyond painting to three dimensional work. Whereas Kiefer focuses on lead sculptures, Baselitz explores carving wood to create shape and form.



Georg Baselitz, *Untitled*, 1982–3
Lead, metal, wood and plaster. 325 x 474 x 150 cm.³⁷



Anselm Kiefer, *The Language of the Birds*, 2013. Lead, metal, wood and plaster. 325 x 474 x 150 cm. Private Collection. © Anselm Kiefer. ³⁸

In both cases, the material used in the sculptures is symbolic for the message they are

³⁶ Puliafito, Isabella. "Isabella Puliafito on Georg Baselitz and Anselm Kiefer." Artforum.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2017.

³⁷ Tate. "'Untitled', Georg Baselitz, 1982-3." Tate. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2017.

³⁸ "Anselm Kiefer: A Beginner's Guide | Blog." Royal Academy of Arts. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Oct. 2017.

trying to conceive. Georg Baselitz uses wood 'to avoid all manual dexterity, all elegance, everything to do with construction'.³⁹ In Kiefer's case, the lead represents "the only material heavy enough to carry the weight of human history".⁴⁰ The artists use different materials to develop their thoughts, but there is great similarity in their use of scale, magnified in order to impact the audience and create a forceful impression on them.

After talking to Anselm Kiefer inside his studio filled with large scale paintings and books covering the floor, the artist commented on a future project that involved creating a sculpture. Kiefer explained that this sculpture would be a large metallic structure with glass, encompassing up to six metres in height and a large cross sectional area. This sculpture, considered by some to be a building, would be a "metallic structure covered in glass and filled with film strips hanging from the wall surrounding a water mirror in the floor"⁴¹. Inside the building, the viewer would have to walk around to view it entirely, making it very similar to taking part in a performance. The artist commented "An art piece should be considered as more than just an art building."⁴² Both the scale and the elements of the piece impact the audience. Georg Baselitz aims to have a similar effect by increasing the scale of some of his recent work, like, for example, the sculpture entitled 'The Three Sisters'- The materiality of the pieces is also a key element of each piece. Kiefer chooses to create a building out of steel to reinforce its strength and Georg

³⁹ Tate. "'Untitled', Georg Baselitz, 1982-3." *Tate*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Oct. 2017.

⁴⁰ "Anselm Kiefer: A Beginner's Guide | Blog." Royal Academy of Arts. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Oct. 2017.

⁴¹ Appendix 1

⁴² Appendix 1

baselitz changes from creating sculptures made of wood to creating sculptures made of bronze. The artist comments, "In the meantime, sculpture has become so important to me that I make bronzes, so that they are timeless."⁴³



Georg Baselitz

"Akt und Flasche (Nude and Bottle)", 1977
Oil, tempera on wood, 170.2 cm⁴⁴



Anselm Kiefer

Ritt an die Weichsel, 1980
Oil on canvas, 130 × 170 cm⁴⁵

As well as his sculptures, Kiefer's paintings show a resemblance and influence from those of Georg Baselitz. Anselm Kiefer's paintings are a derivative of Baselitz'

⁴³ Siemens. "Georg Baselitz Sculpture „Schwestergruppe." *YouTube*. YouTube, 20 Jan. 2017. Web. 25 Oct. 2017.

⁴⁴ "Georg Baselitz |." *Georg Baselitz | "Akt Und Flasche (Nude and Bottle)" (1977) | Available for Sale | Artsy*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2017.

⁴⁵ "In Past Show Anselm Kiefer at Centre Pompidou." *Anselm Kiefer | Ritt an Die Weichsel (1980) | Artsy*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2017.

philosophy of mark making, energy and building up of paint. These attributes from Baselitz' paintings are present today in Kiefer's pieces, as demonstrated in the pieces compared above. In the Piece 'Nude and the bottle', for example, Baselitz builds up paint in a very expressive and loose manner; Michael Werner Gallery comments "A rhythmic, primordial energy resonates in several large pastels and in two important canvases".⁴⁶ This technique is also present in the piece 'Ritt an die Weichsel' by Anselm Kiefer, demonstrated by his building up of paint and loose mark making.

⁴⁶ "Georg Baselitz: 1977-1992 at Michael Werner Gallery, Mayfair, London." *GalleriesNow.net*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2017.

Conclusion

After comparing some early pieces by Anselm Kiefer to works by Georg Baselitz and Joseph Beuys, it is possible to conclude that Anselm Kiefer is not, as people say, a loner practitioner of art. His work is inspired by modern German artists such as the ones referred to in this essay.

Often, Kiefer is classified as a lone art practitioner, unable to be linked to other art movements and artists, however, the findings demonstrated in this essay explain that Kiefer's work is actually more aligned to other artists and movements than people imagine. The connections between his work and that of Joseph Beuys and Georg Baselitz, two modern German artists, indicate this. Kiefer's present work encompasses various themes and is very broad in terms of form: his body of work includes photography, printing, painting, sculpture and performance art. This variety is what people come across when they look at Kiefer's body of work and all of these elements are what make it hard to classify. However, looking back to his first stage as an art practitioner and the work he was creating, the work that shaped his present body of work, is what has enabled us to conclude that he is not a lone practitioner as he was greatly influenced by other artists when he first began creating. Kiefer starts his early practice of photography and performance exist within the context of the disciplines of other German artists working with similar themes. Beuys and Baselitz are not bound by

only one discipline either. All of his early work is still present in the way he is moving forward as an artist now.

Maybe the question of whether or not he is a lone practitioner comes from the fact that Kiefer himself is quite secretive and exclusive. He is not very open when talking about his work and he leaves many of his pieces to interpretation. In a way, his reputation of not being able to be categorised is not so much about the work but about him as an artist and the way he works. The apparent movement through different conceptual ideas and media defines Kiefer's art practice; but he is clearly not alone, as his work is held within a post-holocaust German Art movement that is relevant to other artists as well.

Figure List

1. Anselm Kiefer - Bohemia Lies by the Sea 1996, Medium: Oil, emulsion, shellac, charcoal, and powdered paint on burlap
2. Anselm Kiefer 'Der Fruchtbare Halbmond - La Mezzaluna Fertile, 2012'
3. Anselm Kiefer For Segantini: die bösen Mütter (For Segantini: The Bad Mothers), 2011-2012. Oil, emulsion, acrylic, shellac, wood, metal, lead, and sediment of an electrolysis on canvas. 280 × 300 × 54.9 cm
4. Anselm Kiefer The Shape of Ancient Thought, 2012. Electrolysis on photographic paper on lead. 307 × 440 × 4 cm
5. Joseph Beuys - Heinrich Riebesehl - photographed during his performance, Model fat corners at the Fluxus Festival of New Art , Technical College Aachen, 20 July 1964
6. Anselm Kiefer, *Heroic Symbols* (Heroische Sinnbilder) 1969, Photograph, black and white, on paper. Tate and National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh
7. Joseph Beuys, The Pack (das Rudel), 1969 Volkswagen bus made in 1961, 24 sleighs, each equipped with fat, felt blankets, belts, and torchlight. 200 × 400 × 1000 cm
8. Anselm Kiefer, The Women of the Revolution (Les Femmes de la Révolution), 1992, Lead beds, photograph on lead
9. Georg Baselitz, Große Nacht im Eimer (Big Night down the Drain), 1962–1963, Oil on canvas, 185 x 165 cm
10. Anselm Kiefer, *Heroic Symbols* (Heroische Sinnbilder) 1969, Photograph, black and white, on paper, Tate and National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh
11. Georg Baselitz, Untitled, 1982–3, Lead, metal, wood and plaster. 325 x 474 x 150 cm.\
12. Anselm Kiefer, *The Language of the Birds*, 2013. Lead, metal, wood and plaster. 325 x 474 x 150 cm. Private Collection. © Anselm Kiefer.
13. Georg Baselitz "*Akt und Flasche (Nude and Bottle)*", 1977 Oil, tempera on wood, 170.2 cm
14. Anselm Kiefer *Ritt an die Weichsel*, 1980 Oil on canvas, 130 × 170 cm

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Appendix

1. Edited Transcript from meeting with Anselm Kiefer.

Comporta, Setubal

31 August 2017

,

AK: This is the project we were talking about earlier with Marie

FB: Are you planning on building something?

AK: An artwork, yes. We started off by building it 6 meters high.

FB: How do you want the final piece to look like?

AK: We want to make a large metallic structure covered in glass and filled with film strips hanging from the wall surrounding a water mirror in the floor. The film strips are lead molded. It will have tree stories and the audience will exit through the other side of the building. In the middle of the space, there will be a water mirror that will reflect the images that hang above it. An art piece should be considered as more than just an art building

*Inside the studio

FB: Are you currently working on these pieces?

AK: Yes.

FB: How is the process of transporting your pieces?

AK: I make them in separate canvases, to facilitate transport. I generally work very large scale. When I did the paintings for the Bilbao, the paintings I made, the size of this wall, were too small for them. 2