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INTRODUCTION

"Traditions are the forms by which we appropriate history as as an effective force in the present".

In order to break from a tradition, it is necessary to have the understanding of unambiguous, constant and secure traditions, the lack of historical knowledge and understanding of the past (forms a shaky if non-existent structure to create innovation) particularly a conscious decision not to deal with the past not to acknowledge it might imply it never existed. With the upheaval of German history of the twentieth century it was easier to become absorbed in the international art of "minimalist" art and "abstraction". Renaissances cannot try to resuscitate traditions but they can make sense as an attempt to create new traditions out of historical inventory. Anselm Kiefer 1945 one of the most controversial 'New German painters', reveals his complete empathy with tragic German history, both romantic, mythological and of the holocaust. It is this understanding combined with the intelligent and creative interpretation to visual means gives Kiefer the strength to venture on unknown territory. At times Kiefer is walking on a precipice as he pushes the content in the imagery to the limits of its capacity.

For Kiefer and his contemporaries (Markus Lupertz, George Baselitz, A.R. Penck, Jorg Immendorff, Sigmar Polke) to take a stance like this in a hostile political climate, it is evident that through this action, their art has a future. They could have taken the safe option, if they had remained in the now luke warm

With the advent of modernism, they would have undoubtedly avoided endless denunciations, their gesture was critical in a hypocritical situation i.e. that of German identity and nationalism. Their case is a German case in a historical context but their cause is universal where in the twentieth century the artist and indeed up and coming artists are faced with the dilemma of being true to themselves, having the guts to be reactionary, if necessary to reveal naked truth, be it on a personal, socio-political or historical level.

In criticism against the new painters at the defense of 'Modernism', the new painters have wrongly been classified as 'Neoexpressionist', implying that their work is expressionism rehashed, that their painting verges on sexism, on the basis that the aggressive brush marks are male gestures sexualised. "Further scouting might produce more evidence that virility is often equated with the probing of space or their masterful brushing of a surface. The metaphor of sculptural extension or battling with the canvas is easily sexualised, because it conflates two desirable goals associated with the energy of creation, with expressionist theory German and American, we are never far removed from its special aura, the imagery of modern art, of course is rich with overtones of masculine aggression and depersonalisation of woman". (2)

To equate aggression and energy of paint as a sexualised male orientated gesture, is an opinion which belongs in the dark ages, and that way of limited thinking is typical of the social conditioning which creates these ridiculous unnatural barriers between men and woman. To be aggressive and dominating is not a male characteristic, it is a human characteristic, male and female. If I as a painter want to use paint in an

aggressive, gestural manner (which comes naturally and is not forced) I do not think of myself as a male, I think and feel as a person who is capable of being aggressive, masterful and also able to express myself in a quieter, more subtle way. "The imagery of modern art, of course is rich with overtones of masculine aggression and the depersonalisation of woman". (3) It is not evident that the imagery of new German painting is rich with overtones of masculine aggression and depersonalisation of woman, it is more revealing that the work portrays the causes of a depersonalisation and division of a nation, the root cause of alienation.

The new painters have been accused of responding to market demand, a demand for figurative work. A ridiculous assumption as we can see by the content, a search for a new German identity in which they have raised an unmentionable issue, the analysis of the rise of fascism, the consequences (unrelentlessly hauled to the surface by Kiefer) and the social problems within Germany today, all subject matter which the prosperous bourgeoisie do not want to hear as this content upsets the now false identity of German culture. This thesis will prove the value of an art process such as Kiefer's and indeed the reactionary work of the new German painters against a complacent society. Kiefer links with the past through reconstruction, he strives for truth, the revival of a tragic past was necessary in the search for a true German identity. A critical process in a hypocritical culture.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

FOOTNOTES

1. Brock Bazon, "The End of the Avant Garde and so the End of Traditions" Art Forum (Summer '81) p.64
2. Buchloh H. D. Benjamin, "Figures of Authority Ciphers of Regression" October No. 16 (Spring '81) p.57
3. (Max Kozluff, "The Authoritarian Personality in Modern Art" Art Forum (May'74)) Buchloh, "Figures of Authority Ciphers of Regression" October (Spring '81) p.58

CONFLICTS WITHIN THE GERMAN TRADITION.

The history of German art since the war was non-existent in terms of truth and strength. A shaky foundation on which to attempt to rebuild upon a void of nihilism. German arts of the modernist era were avoiding the issue of a horrendous history, the Rule of Hitler, the mass murder of six million Jews and a noncultural vacuum.

Post War - after 1945. Artists freedom of choice was still restricted by political and social realities to a point. Artists had choice to confront a historical and political situation but artists took a non-historical and non-political path. Subsequently the art of Post War Germany was weak, vague and had no direction, no past therefore no future. The unnatural history, the rule of fascism, the ban of "degenerate art" and the East and West division, left Germany detached from surrounding countries and art movements. Artists attempted to re-establish the strength of German art, not by confronting the past and coming to terms with their own identity but trying to re-establish links with pre-war artists, this failed so they became absorbed into international art movements - American Abstract, conceptual and minimalist. It is evident that the avoiding of the issue of the recent German past did not regain the once strong recognition of German painting.

In the exhibition of German twentieth century art in the Royal Academy, London (this was organised by Christos Joachimides, Norman Rosenthal and Wieland Schmied) provides a blinkered view of German twentieth century painting. The Structure of the show was direct and uncomplicated, but the

fifteen year gap was not in evidence. Nor important works by Joseph Beuys using felt, fat, wax, all these are essential in the evolution of German spirit in art, as too poetry, prose and writings of many of the artists in the exhibition. It is as if art is a culture only of certain objects and then only objects made in particular materials. This exhibition shows German cultural identity is not top priority. The Post War work is "safe", Anselm Kiefer's work is a scorched Landscape, one wonders if some of his more abrasive work would have been accepted. The exhibition is balanced by Die Brücke and Dada at one end and Contemporary German painting at the other.

The Post War part of the exhibition began with chaos, the attempt to re-establish German Painting, Richard Oelze, presented as one of the few examples of artists who can be taken to represent some type of opposing movement. Willi Baumeister's spectral tatters and the violent spatters of vague areas, this work is typical leading to an imbalance of aesthetics over content. This was the modernist idiom in which abstract work was the sole proof of progressive art. These Post War styles lacked resistance in a spiritual sense, they were denying their past, and without a tradition, innovation is impossible. The act of creating innovation, a totally new concept causing uproar, confusion is part of a necessary cycle in forming traditions, the formation of the avant-garde traditions are not always secure and stationary artifacts of the past that continue to affect the present, it is the new art, which puts the past in perspective. 'Traditions are the forms by which we appropriate history as an effective force in the present'. (1).

New German painters have been tarred with the wrong brush, the defenders of abstraction accused the new painting as reactionary

and bombastic almost authoritarian, critics both American and German reacted negatively when works by Kiefer, Baselitz, Lupertz, Penck came on the scene. They claimed that the use of paint as a medium in a figurative mode was obsolete and that their manner of painting was neo-expressionist therefore decadent, the new German painting was said to lack the critical character of modern art, abstraction was to be progressive. As Benjamin Buchloh wrote in a marxist attack 'they were not even novel, he accused their newness as "current historical availability, not in any actual innovation of artistic practice".¹ Because the modernist movement failed Buchloh claims it is tied to the renewal of political oppression. The new painting symbolises this for Buchloh because of this he regards the work more of a social symptom, rather than artistic innovation. The modern movement went to seed. The modernist era was over, particularly the work of German modernist painters, as their work was based on a non historical culture, its strategies of "parody and appropriation" were over worked and became mechanical actions. New German painting is non sympathetic to modernism this is why modernism suffers.² 'It is presented as a handicapped art, crippled by multiple sins of regression, sins of commission, adding up to a major sin of omission, namely the absence of the epistemological understanding of art, called modern'.

It is evident that since the war artists such as Bacon, Bathus, Golub, the Cobras have all painted with a feeling for expression and figuration, their work of Post War years was put aside for a characterless preference for abstraction, the

figurative painting never died it was always on the peripheral. The new painters have been painting consistently for the last two decades. They were concerned with physical being, intellectual and sensual engagement. Anselm Kiefer's work and that of the new German painters, Baselitz, Lupertz, Penck and Immendorf was a renaissance of truth, a reaction against modernist objectivity and art which had no direction or purpose but to try and produce a style which could join the international art scene. The modernist era was more concerned with aesthetics than content. In work from German modernity it avoided its past, thus denying its past, therefore denying a national identity.

The new painters have hit the art works by storm, recent Documenta's, New expressions from Germany, A new spirit in painting, Victor Burgin has claimed that this work is the consequence of market demand. 3. 'An art dealers "putch" to sell anachronistic, expressionist revival. The market's problem is that there is never very much good art. As the market grows there is proportionally less good art and it becomes harder to convince the art public that the art on hand amounts to much. Therefore the market welcomes any attack on high standards which can be sufficiently rationalised. By demeaning high standards and anyone which adheres to them or even invokes them and by reducing the modernist from paragon to pariah the new art and Post modernism paid the market what it wants and needs, what a relief not to have to worry about what is good! With that out of the way the market can get down to the very serious business of selling lots of very bad art for very high prices'.

This argument is based on the assumption that new painting is expressionism rehashed, this is not so, the new painters are a far cry from being neo-expressionist.

The new German painters do not aim for unmediated expression which by using an already existing language of natural expression which depends on the spontaneous union of opposites in a single gesture, the German painters' attempt to provoke us in resistance to abstraction, perhaps taking the audience to extreme limits, as a reaction to abstract art, social reaction out of necessity. The point is that an abstract gesture that is only superficially spontaneous is used, as in the work of Baselitz where he inverts his figures, in doing this he disintegrates a dominating abstraction, a representation that was acquired the status of an abstraction because of its typicality. Kiefer also with layer upon layer of paint, shellac, straw breaks down the representation, leaving us with the abstract naturalness and riskiness as an expression. There is no real appeal to instruct in this use of gesture. Right from the start it is socially determined just as the figures are culturally conditioned. Neither gesture nor figure tries to escape its overdetermined situation, nor do they attempt to articulate a freedom, the freedom to resist mythologized abstraction. The new painters consciously chose their medium and methodology, the work was not an unmitigated splurge of uncontrolled orgiastic expression, it was calculated and deliberate in its execution. This staged freedom in turn, gives the myth of natural expression substance.

Artists which could be categorised as neo-expressionists, because the work is related to the German traditional expressionist idea of nature as the source of all significance, Hodicke, Koberling and Zimmer, work with nature in the conventional sense their work is non historical and non political, unlike the new German painters. In the neo-expressionist work it is clearly evident, their sensuality and natural subject matter.

The work of the new German painters was a revolt against a decadent art situation as well as a search for their own identity. The new painters, particularly Anselm Kiefer wish to expose a part of German culture which has been repressed by Post War capitalism, the economic boom, soon wiped the slate clean of a tragic past, but culturally Germany had no identity of its own. For artists to admit that there was something deeply wrong with the past is a step in the right direction in a healing process which can rebuild a German identity. To bury one's head in "modernism" a movement which has outlived its time, is stubborn and futile.

In a rapidly changing world, where mass production, mass communication and automation is prominent, the voice of the individual is weak, particularly if the message goes against the grain. For critics to condemn work which is an attempt to confront the human situation (be it historical, political or social) work with a healthy view to resolution is inhuman and vicious. This type of destructive criticism is the product of a modern world, a blight against an honest attempt to come to terms with an irreconcilable past. The modernist movement is over, to flog an idea beyond its capacity is futile, modernism collapsed under its own weight, a natural process. The power is essential to look into the future and venture forth into unknown territory. This is what the new German painters have done, dealing with a past and present which has been regarded as taboo, often work is clumsy and awkward, this awkwardness is a sign of authentic feeling if not alone the source of great art.

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, has not only claimed that the new painters have extreme right wing tendencies, that their vitality is

authoritarian. He has also declared them sexist in the manner in which they paint. 4 'Further scouting might produce more evidence that virility is often equated with the probing of space or the masterful brushing of a surface. The metaphor of sculptural extension or battling with the canvas is easily sexualised because it conflates two desirable goals associated with the energy of creation, with expressionist theory German and American, we are never far removed from its special aura. The Imaginary of modern art, of course, is rich with overtones of masculine aggression and depersonalisation of woman'.

To use a reason as this is both cliched and a state of kind which shows limited development. This age old concept that man is aggressive, dominating and that women are passive and retreating, this concept is one of the main obstacles which obstruct harmony in the polemic war of the sexes. Perhaps through social conditioning these traits can be found but essentially in a natural context, there are aggressive dominating characteristics both in women and in men, equally there are passive and retreating characteristics both in men as in women.

It is an unjust assumption by V. Bergin that the work of the new painters is a response to market demand. Kiefer's context reveals that he is not striving for celebrity or success because even the art-political climate of to-day in West Germany could classify his work and other work of new German painters Baselitz, Rupertz, Penck were treated like the degenerate artists. The "Degenerate art" of war years has been kept alive to a degree. In 1980 the Kiefer and Baselitz in the Venice Biennale were rejected by German critics, critics who had a fear of the truth, they felt that their work was using extinct artistic methods to promote equally obsolete German mythology. In the

last fifteen years the growth of new German art has revealed that the world's economic and political problems proven to be the explanation of the rise of fascist rule of Germany are insufficient and pathetic. The overall attitude of the political view of Germany was to deny the past and thus hopefully obliterate it from history. It was lack of responsibility on the part of the people.

Within Western Germany, the arts, the sciences and literature at once has a political part because the arts and sciences are greatly dependent on the government for financial support. Although it is a good idea to make arts independent of private dealers, the political control is too much. When major collectors can enlist government support to establish themselves as public institution, this results in a cultural-political pact powerful enough to break up cultural communities and friendships between artists and also creating a critical bias amongst art critics against which appears threatening to the German State for their works imply an investigation into the cultural past and in the process make problems for the existing alliances.

To these critics figurative art is obsolete. The new painters seen as foolishly traditional but what has really happened is that minimal and conceptual art have been thrashed out they have been developed to the point of negation that is not to say this form of expression is dead forever at this point in art history, it has out lived its existence, because the critics will not admit this, they deny its vanguard character because to acknowledge its radicalness would be to the modernist era's

credibility at the development of new painting. Because of critics loyalty to the modernist cause they are traditionalists, a tradition which to continue in the same vein would be to regress.

For these critics, the new German painting is willfully decadent, not only incapable, rising the heights of modernist criticality to the extent they can demonstrate the outright decadence of the new German painting - blurring perception of it with their label neo-expressionist, so they protect their own reputation as progressive and radical, because how can there be two radical movements at the same time one must lead at the expense of another. These opposing critics want the panache of being left leaning without any conception of what a true leftist society might be. The German painting is a convenient whipping boy for ineffectual directionless criticism and criticality that no longer really knows what it is doing.

PART II

TRUTH VERSUS COMPLACENCY

Post war Germany forgot the past the past was unmentionable so painting soared to a "higher plane", conceptual, minimalist, far above human pain, suffering and German culture.

Painting showed its indifference to the world historical by becoming militantly abstract and the German spirit thought it could make world history by becoming aggressive in the name of abstract ideas. "Both became outcasts by reason of their excessive purity. By becoming completely abstract art "unrealistic", useless for human purposes". (8)

George Baselitz felt strongly that Konrad Adenauer's Germany was complacent, denied the past and considered the fascist era taboo, unspeakable, never to be resolved. In order to deny effectively, one has to deny the power of the subconscious and emotions reacting against the "safe" art of the museums. Baselitz was aggressive and sought to get to the core of the humanity, exploring the irrational and the mad. "We have blasphemy on our side! In my eyes can be seen the altar of nature, the sacrifice of flesh, bits of food into the drain, evaporation from the bed-clothes bleeding from stumps and aerial roots with column obsessiveness radical gestures we want to excavate ourselves, abandon ourselves, we live to an endless ecstasy. My secret paranoia on paranoia I am in Pandemonium undergoing hygienic solace". (9) This purging, painting the dark side of humanity gave Baselitz and Rupert, Penck, Immendorf and Kiefer opportunity of confrontation with these elements and thus be cleansed, leading to a resolution of the past. Compared to Kiefer, Baselitz contends the past in a more contemporary,

personal way, gut reaction and gesture are strong, violent paint marks, hatching out figures. The use of strong imagery, of monumental content satisfied Baselitz momentarily. For example a painting of the hand of God, the concept in itself is monumental as well as being portrayed as a monumental image. The viewer is at first taken by the image of the hand of God, holding simple images of everyday life, a house, a plough and three crows flying above all indicating the scale of the massive hand, confronting the viewer with every day imagery and then subverting these images by the hand marks of paint and texture has more of an emotional effect, in comparison to Kiefer when the medium is an extension of an abstract thought, allegorical meanings, words which can be extended into nature by the use of natural materials further by painting figures upside down which give them an almost abstract quality but although Baselitz wanted to pull away from representation but in the way he achieves this is ambiguous because on viewing the canvases it is natural to revert the figures to bring the right way up again. Baselitz seems to address our concept of reality and turn it around so it can be seen in another way. Markus Lupertz tackled the problem in a more meditative way, his series of Dithyrambic paintings, symbols of psychic wholeness, I would feel were trying to revert back to a higher purer state of being through contemplating these images, reaching a higher consciousness away from banal everyday life, but I anticipate although it is good to use this state of mind occasionally as a reprieve, I think it can be avoiding reality, on other words avoiding the issue. Thankfully Lupertz's dithyrambic shapes evolved into more distinct shapes, resembling objects from the conscious world. I think Lupertz perhaps used the dithyrambic as a way of clearing the mind, so ridding the mind of the first part of the Apocalypse - dithyramb (73) : Three canvases shell like shapes. The middle canvas is a shell shape painted with a Hamburg

hat and coal shuttle helmet (army , ridiculing) both having German associations Lupertz, ridicules these images they are no longer important symbols of wealth and power, but just objects, it is through paint he achieves this levelling effect.

Joseph Beuys was the leader of German Post war esthetic renewal, thanks to Beuys younger up and coming German artists were able to reestablish links with their German past. In the sixties Beuys was an underground name in the American art scene, art students had the greatest admiration for him. At first his work was seemed confusing, when the audience ways bits and pieces of his work, felt a silver broom a blackboard with scrawls it was by mistake conjured with - oldenburg and pop art. The use of that was associated with post minimal involvements in non painting/ art materials and informal structure. When he came to New York in 1974, and talked to a coyote in the gallery, the audience interpreted it in terms of our own performance art. These parallels were misleading performance art. These parallels were misleading inOur Literal Climate, the audience never suspected that he might have been a symbolist an expressionist, a mystical romanticist. His work resonates the dark romanticism of Kasper David Frederick and Richard Wagner, the agonised torments of German romanticism, was paralled with the alienated despair of the Weimar Republic the process was an exorcism of secret horrors, a therapeutic act and it exudes a teutonic cruelty, there is a manical obsessionness in Beuy's work. He repeats in variations his experience of being saved from death and in doing this he reveals the extremities of war, the extremities of the human condition. This theme is constant through Kiefers work, the opposing elements of humanity although he approaches it in a more literal way Beuys he refers to historical and mythological and Biblical narrative as if he is attempting to confront the entire root to the human

cause. With such searching work as this it may be too bitter a pill for the audience to swallow. Work of new German painters is the fruit of Beuy's process.

Kiefers revival of German mythology, Romanticism (Wagner) and literature is in a sense like a primordial ritual of cleansing as Hitler had corrupted them, thus they were made taboo by nazism.

Kiefer is the modern equivalent grand scale history painter using didactic structures, rather than Beuy's transitory materials, or actions, although the use of natural materials limits the life span of his paintings, the image itself will hold for a long time, and its transcendence is the laying to rest of an once unmentionable dilemma. Kiefer's paintings require investigation and examination for its allegorical content and surface texture is similar to Jackson Pollock's all over abstraction with drips and stipples of paint in the same way every inch in Kiefers canvases are covered in textural detail. Confusion arises in response to the content in the paintings and because of his lack of clarity in early works, but because he was voicing his thoughts in a manner which could be read very literally critics often got it wrong. In some cases he is accused of having a sinister nostalgia for Hitler.

Kiefer at twenty four years was photographed performing a Nazi salute at the edge of the sea, this act by Kiefer is a bitter parody of Hitler, the Nazi as King Canute who in the Nordic legend describes how King Canute rebuked his flatterers by commanding the waves to stand still, but all in vain, to show the limits of his power. Their hostile political climate of Germany conveniently saw Kiefer as a Nazi worshipper.

Kiefer can be misunderstood in that he uses a literal process to create a scene, an image. It is in situations as the above that Kiefer is walking a precipice, where he is pushing the concept of fascism to its limit of acceptability. This reinforces the concept which is often mis-interpreted that because figures and figurative images are recognisable does not mean that they end there, in Kiefers work the figure is the vehicle for allegorical reference. This may be failing in Kiefer in that a misconception such as the above is completely destructive of his content.

Other works which are lacking in clarity in the seventies, he strove to be forceful almost auctoritative, this led to confusion where he tried to contain to mock imagery and structural devices in the one painting.

Ways of worldly wisdom 1976 - 1977 attempts to create a whole history of German Nationalism beginning with Arminius who in A.D. 9 destroyed Augustus Caesar's policy of German occupation of destroying three Roman legions in the dark Teutoberg forest. This moment of destiny inspired the imaginations of generation of German artists, poets historians politicians and generals. In the nineteenth century when the dream of a united Germany became powerful; Herman became a symbol of a national liberation. Kiefer depicts the primordial German forest where the battle took place with images of the figures who idolized him and the power he represents writers such as Count Schlieffen, Blucher, von Moltke and moralists and philosophers such as Heidegger and Langbehn. Kiefer gives us a textbook illustration of the genuinely German in a



WAYS OF WORLD WISDOM 1976 - 1977

literal sense the painting is a dark maze of lines and portraits and detracts from the images, it is different to engage with content, but what is relevant is Kiefers probing back into history to the original object image of being German, from which the German tradition tradition began.

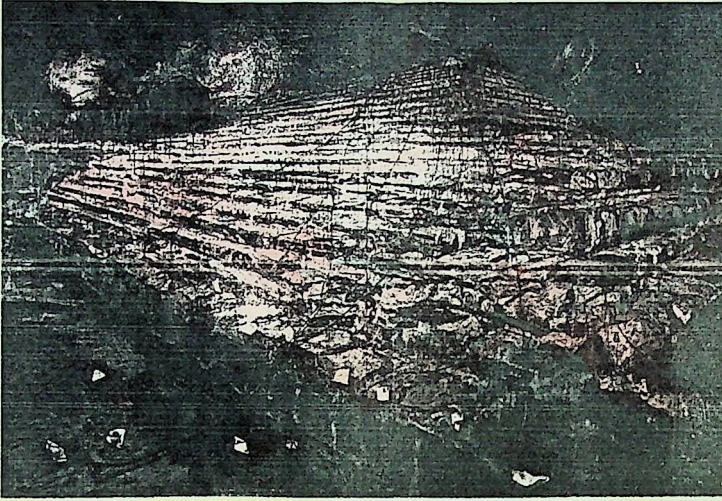
Keifer means to undo the traditional German self. By both reenacting its history on an artistic stage, and acting against it in imagination practically creating images of destruction of spiritual symbols - Kiefer clears the ground of the German psyche so that a refreshed sense of being can grow from German soil. This process evokes change, the German self has been split into aggressive and spiritual parts, clears the deck for a new German self which only history will reveal. Kiefer reviving the shamanistic function of art, only purges the dark German self, evident in the way he uses the palette as a device in paintings, his idealisation will depend entirely on his expectation that it can break down the traditional German image. The action of Kiefer performing the nazi salute by the sea and in various European towns shows his necessity to reenact aggressive episodes of the German past, and most important, shows his need to engage in German arrogance.

CHAPTER I

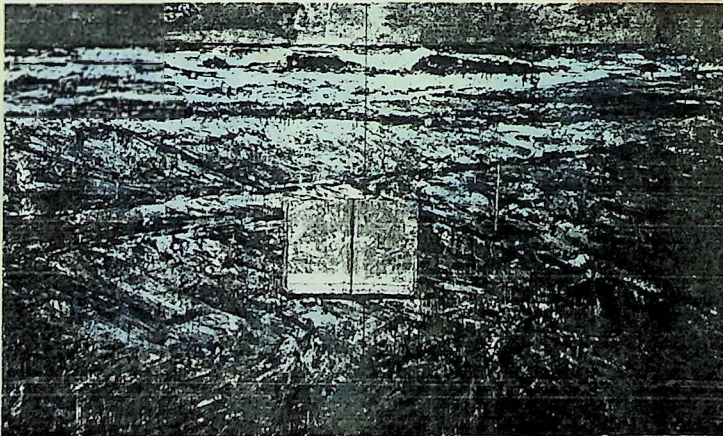
PART II

FOOTNOTES

8. Kuspit D. Acts of aggression part I art in America
(September 1982)
9. Baselitz quoted in essay by Tony Gregory, The New Image.
Phaidon Oxford.



OSIRIS AND ISIS 1985 - 1987



THE BOOK 1979 - 1985, PAGES OF LEAD
SURROUNDING SPACE, SAND AND BROKEN CERAMICS

LIBERATION FROM THE SELF REFLECTIVE AESTHETIC EXERCISE.

Kiefer sets out to reclaim the German identity, and place it back in perspective. Kiefer evokes a timeless, primordial past, set on a stage of unending dynamics and surface detail, but despite the depth and resonance of Kiefer's work, through this he reveals the shallowness of the German identity, that there is really very little depth of meaning in being German. He depicts that the "eternal German" is absurd, he shows us that the German power - be it military or intellectual - was not so absolute as was later thought. By articulating German arrogance in Nordic myth, as abstract fantasies, he brings it back to the more realistic scale of just being myth and fantasy. Kiefer prompts that the German myth has come to the end of its history, for it exists only in vague, "narcissistic" abstract form.

Paths 1V 1978; Paths V11 1978.

Some of Kiefer's earlier work, mocking the myth, these works are heavy handed and confused, at this literal level, they are too complex in their structure, and they have an effect of repulsion, because they are so overworked, I think Kiefer here falls into the trap of becoming too involved in the subject matter, so he is not doing the quality paintings justice, I feel he is too emotionally involved at this stage, the paintings are chaotic, excessive, there is too much activity at once.

Kiefer is more successful when he tries to be less conceptually bombastic, and uses simpler more direct images like "the book" "Ikarus", "Osiris" and "Isis" 1985-87. The source of idea for the book was from German romanticism. Friedrich's Monk by the sea 1908. A minute figure contemplating infinity, culture lost before the magnitude of nature. Kiefer reverses this concept the main motif is a lead book, its shiny pages catch the light, placed in the centre of a vast seascape with lead, straw and broken

ceramics what does the book signify, the creation, revelation, God? A simple structure with numerous allegorical possibilities."Osiris and Isis". In Egyptian mythology, the God Osiris was murdered and dismembered by his brother Set. All the parts of the body except the penis were then reassembled for burial by his sister wife. So that he could have eternal life. An immense liturgy of transformation grew from this myth and Kiefer uses it to connect primal fertility rites to the no less awful mysteries of nuclear technology. The painting is a huge step pyramid, the site of Osiris burial. This also implies the form of a nuclear reactor. Osiris's body parts are ceramic fragments scattered at the base, each wired by bright copper cables to the soul of Isis at the summit of the tomb. Death and integration fission fusion. Through such metaphors, Kiefer set forth images charged with warning and spread with hope, in this case it is the myth that offers hope.

It is in the more successful paintings including Osiris and Isis that Kiefer can appear to be like an "old master" i.e. painting the world as if it already happened - as if it has long been the case, and is even more inwardly familiar to one than one is to oneself.

Kiefer rebuilds the past, his paintings even look old, they are decaying, transient, as his use of natural materials erode with time a lot of his materials would include paper, staples, canvas, rough foil, (once molten lead, now cooled) sand, gold leaf, copper wire wood cuts and lumps of broken pottery. As Victor Burgin implied at the beginning of this thesis that the new painters were responding to market demand. I think if Kiefer was mercenary he would make his work much more lasting, they will hardly last more than fifty years, this fact does not appear to discourage collectors. The surface of his paintings are

straight line is subject to several picto-metaphoric variations in Kiefer's work.^{N.P.} The use of the wings of Ikarus, not only because of possibility to fly but of allegorical meaning, in the myth of the powers of creation. Ikarus, the wings contain more than can be expressed in an abstract vertical line. The wings overcoming physical gravity and through them the boundary between heaven and earth, the landscape becomes the distinction of matter and spirituality.

Opposites which will never meet, a metaphor for the physical and spiritual destruction of a people. Kiefer uses devices to attempt to link, it reveals the impossibility of union, but this past has a right to be exposed if only to reveal the monumentality of a scarred land and a scared people, and it is the survivors who must relive it.

Through this process emerges a hardened reality, Kiefer is resurrecting the past bringing it to the present so it can be resolved.

This work has erupted from an era of modernity, the cool calculating rhythms of minimalism pop and conceptual art, in a world where figurative painting was regarded as base, ~~lowest~~ ~~cultural~~ ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~art~~ ~~and~~ ~~in~~ ~~spiritual~~ ~~depths~~. Painting was discarded because of its anamorphism as mentioned before, the early Post War painting was vague, it was more concerned with the linking with international art scene than analysing the German cultural situation and making an effort to resolve it.

In attempting to restore this national heritage, Kiefer speaks on behalf of victims of national socialism. He is now

super senses, perhaps a link with the French "Informal", and Jackson Pollacks influence of emeshed texture, this shows that Kiefer was aware of art movements around him, even though one would parallel him with the nineteenth century romantics. This process is a complex one, it is not slick or free flowing, the element of chance is small. The paint media are heavy and pedantic often his images lack clarity but his allegorical dead landscapes, collaged straw and earth have a natural physicality. The charred ploughed landscapes symbolise not only farmland but a frontier, no-mansland, graveyard and the biblical desert for exodus. The scale of the work, reclaims large expanses of land, through vastness, and perspective the monumentality of the content demands theatrical scale. German epic mythology, Wagnerian operas, the content of these was distorted and reconstructed to suit the fascist rule of Germany. Between mixed media, nature related substances and internally architectural formal compositions with images from other worlds. Kiefer creates the past in an investigable manner in which the viewer must research in order to understand. How can a past be revealed without being blatant and sensationalist. Kiefer's work is sh^haded in mystery, he delves deep into the German past and towards the viewer with opposites of life and death, heaven and earth, creation and apocalypse.

Kiefer uses paint to quantify these elements, he uses paint as a creative theory of the universe.

In "Heaven and Earth 1974" he uses a perpendicular line with painting written to one side, this divides the oval palette shape almost outlining the painting a clue of Kiefer's ideological beliefs in art. The palette shape is links at furtherest points marked "Heaven and Earth", it is an ascending movement. The line indicates the polarities of upper and lower, thus to its bracketing function in the art of painting. The creative structure expressed in the



HEAVEN AND EARTH. 1974

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enabling an opinion which was ignored during and after the war. Kiefer's work is a commentary on German nationality and through rebuilding a past of heroic Germany, then breaking this down, an emotionally charged process of remembrance begins. He questions the past and the present, the land and its history. The land holds the past and thus the solution because nature is the silent core of reality. The history is in the earth. Kiefer uses the elements of nature to enable to begin a healing process both in earthly and spiritual level.

"The earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters " Genesis.

Kiefer has taken the landscape motif as a plateau on which to stage the past and place allegorical symbols and meanings on. The land is the silent observer of the past.

The landscape is recurring in the tradition of German art particularly in the new classicism and neo romanticism the neo classicism of such with the support of Goethe who took over the remainder of the Rococo was not strong enough to serve as a structure for German painting, German neo classicism was at the beginning a literary structure, that brought Philip Otto Runge and Casper David Friedrich more in the way of education and self correction than in inspiration.

Romantic art was "reduced" to landscape painting, which in itself was not strong enough to form the basis of the German tradition on its own. Even Goethe's involvement, which demanded landscape to contain more than it revealed at a surface level. With painting for the sake of itself without communication, it ceases to have reason, whether it is to portray the peace and beauty of a landscape of a socio-political situation.

In Kiefer's use of landscape, it is a stage on which to set a history, to relive a history of horror, his landscapes are vast expanses of earth, scorched earth, ploughed fields, or seascapes which stretch on to infinity. The images combined with the landscape are from mythology biblical literal and from the Holocaust. Kiefer's landscape can have an unearthly almost cosmic feeling about them, in one sense he uses



BRUCH DER GLASSE . KIEFER . 81.
(59 x 86,5 cm)

the earth in an abstract conceptual way. In the Exodus series and the heaven and earth will never meet, his landscapes are full of opposites whilst the land is stretching to infinity, it is at the same time pushing the heavens away, heaven and earth are destined never to meet, the horizon is a boundary between heaven and earth. Here the land is the stage on which Kiefer rebuilds a past, a past of silent horror.

In the Exodus series of painting from 1980-85 the main colour range is brown, black and white with occasional ochered yellows, reds and a cold blue from once molten lead, this limited colour use creates a brooding atmosphere, an atmosphere of possibilities, creation apocalyptic, both fear and hope a tense stark reality of a history that was unfairly forgotten.

The land is timeless, it can be the land of war torn Germany or the land images of creation which present the creation of the worlds of Genises as an act in the process of creation.

Kiefer does not directly illustrate the past, he uses allegorical symbols and devices, which require investigation to understand, this is not to say that he is obscure, his work is not a blatant protest or an obscure gut reaction but simply and piercingly portrays atmospheres of desolation and events which conjure up a vivid picture of the truth, this is far more effective.

Although Kiefer's landscapes can be seen as boundaries between heaven and earth he uses devices of possibility to attempt to bridge the gap, like the wings of Icarus in "Icarus" 1981, a scorched landscape pushing away the heavens, the wings are painted in an upward thrusting marks adding to a feeling of vertical movement, the wings have the gift of flight, a possibility to link the heavens and earth, but these could be the wings of Icarus, because they are rooted in the myth of the



IKARUS 1981 (290 X 36 CM)
OIL SAND + PHOTOGRAPH ON CANVAS.



SERAPHIM 1984

powers of creation, they have the impending fate of falling into the sea, as Ikarus did. The Ikarus paintings offer possibility of hope, the wings in making the link between heaven and earth, by overcoming physical gravity and through them the boundary between heaven and earth, between above and below and that of matter and spirit. In the upward thrust of paint these opposites are combined and become one unit of power and force. Another symbol is the ladder in the seraphim images.

In writings of ancient mystics about the theory of creation, the "scientific in the writings of pseudo dionysius on the structure of the heavens" accordingly the world is divided into the lower and upper, a spiritual and intelligible world which are not only opposed to each other, but whose character, consists in their reciprocal denial, in their polar contrastiveness. But in the centre, above this abyss of denial, a spiritual bond links them together. A continuous path of meditation leads from one pole to the other, from the alter-being to the altar one, from the empire to an absolute form show to the absolutely formless matter, there is always something to surmount in between, there always remains a medium of separation which cannot be leapt over but which must be pursued step by step in an orderly sequence. This step ladder which leads from heaven down to earth and up from earth to heaven is systematically described and pictured in the writings of Dionysius. Thus everything emanates from God only to be comprised in him at last and to be revoked in him.

This shows how Kiefer's landscapes though holding possibilities, i.e. the vertical line, but "painting" written upside down in "Heaven and Earth". The wings of Ikarus, fall, in "The Order of Angels" the lines of lead sear downwards, intersecting the lines of perspective in the landscape; these characteristics

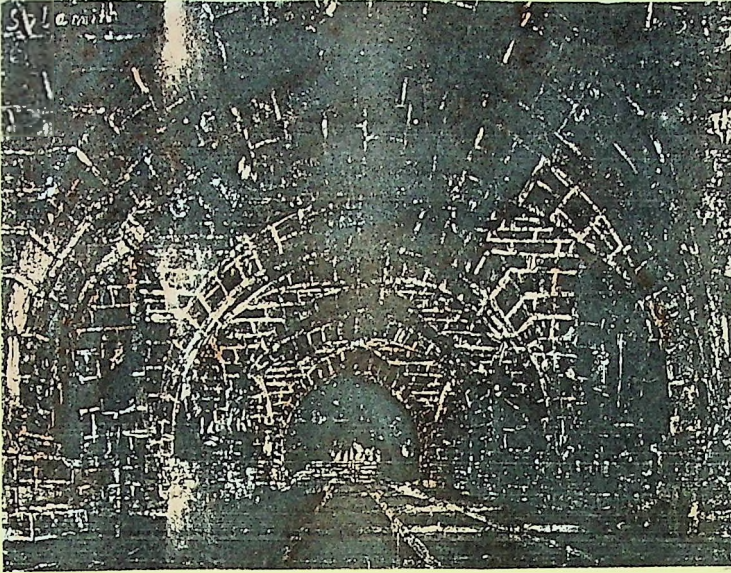
and conflicts in Kiefer's paintings show that he denies interpretations based on the ancient theory of creation, those who believe in it do so for peace of mind. Kiefer is confronting, challenging the mystic.

In contrast to earlier larger landscape the Exodus series (smaller, use of photographic surface) reverse the proportions of above and below, compared to the landscape paintings where the horizon is low and oppressive, the structure is inverted compared to the earthly landscapes, this is possible because Kiefer's landscapes are cosmic, the sense of time can be before or after history, void of humans, therefore void of history.

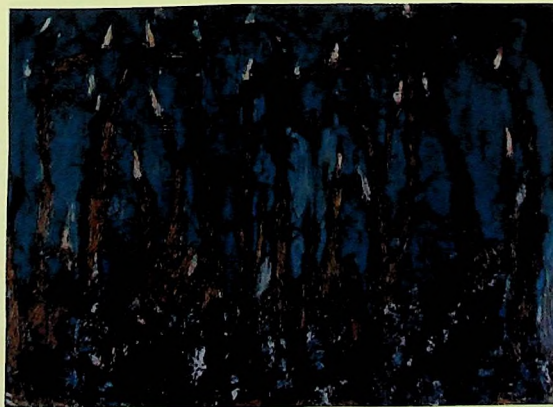
Some of the works are on cardboard, the materials he uses have a metaphorical significance, lead, which is closely related to the earth regarded as primeval matter and as mass confusion, in whose gravity the volatile spirit conceals itself and from which it can be redeemed, leader earth therefore unites the opposites of that above and below. According to an Alchemist practice the redemption of spiritual substance from lower matter takes place in a gradual process of separating and combining of ascending and descending and on a higher level, as the cycle of Death and Resurrection. This inner polarity is appropriate to all of Kiefer's lead metaphors (the wings of the dove, the crook 1979 - 1985 the shepherd's crook) similar analogy applies to vertical, Telegraph poles - masts, steel frames, trees, all rooted to the earth and tower above the landscape. Based on a reproduced landscape, a photograph these objects take on their own originality. As the material and spiritual unity of opposites takes place, the doctrine of death, judgement, heaven and hell, emerges.

More lyrical paintings were based on a poem Paul Celan's "Death Fugue". In the poem the writer's two lovers, German "Margerete" and Jewish "Shulamith" become from Germany in an allusive and indirect way this is a similar way in his paintings and just as Kiefer will always see history in terms of landscape so the golden hair of Margete and Shulamith, the ashes of the stubble. The two are one in that in the destruction of the Jews also the German culture is destroyed. The cremated Jewess, interweave in Kiefer work in a haunting and oblique way, Margaretes presence is signaled like a motif in music, by long wisps of golden straw. While Shulamites emblem is charred substance and dark shadow.

"Shulamite" 1983, a charred presence in a black crypt, heavy laden paint conveying the ruggedness of the masonry, whose architectural source was a funeral hall for the nazis. At the end of this oppressive dungeon temple is a small fire on a raised alter the Holocaust itself.



SHULAMITE 1983: TRAGIC SENSE, REDEMPTIVE
HOPE AND AMBITIONS RANGING ACROSS HISTORY



MARGERET 1981 . Oil and STRAW
ON CANVAS . 280 X 580 cm .

PART II

"REGRESSION" AS PROGRESSION

The new painters have been labelled as neo-expressionistic. To look at their work with a very naive narrow state of mind, their work could resemble the traditional expressionists, in that it is figurative and the intense energy of the brushstrokes. Because the work has returned to "mimetic" representation, it has regarded as decadent, The figure is the instrument to create the illusion of being natural. The creation of this illusion, to raise the question the artificiality of art and technological society is a major critical aspect of German painting. Therefore a type of artificial natural expression is used to expose the artificiality and abstractiveness of all expression.

"Neo expressionism the very term signal that expressionism is a gestuary of largely self aware acts".¹ This is a negative response, but it can be taken as a positive cue, as I am sure the critic did not intend. But the new painters work is far from un-meditated, this new painting is highly constructed, to build up artificial worlds, this is deliberate. Subtly devaluing and distancing ourselves from our worlds of experience. The fact that the new painters are aware of there acts means they cannot be neo-expressionist, if they were, this would suggest that these artists are part of a modern movement and have reflected a long obsolescent stage in it. The problem with these painters is that in being called post modern, they are being lumped together with modernism and are seen as breaking away from it they were never modernists, they were reacting against modernism.



APOCALYPSE DITHYRAMB. 73

MARKUS LUPERTZ (260 x 734 cm.)

Kiefer, Baselitz, Rupertz, Penck, Immendorf are not looking back, they are not neo-expressionists, neo-fauves. Their work makes us discover aspects in Expressionism and fauves that could not have been perceived before their work began to exercise its effect on us.

There is a proportional relation between external mobility and inner fatigue between the nervous brushstroke and the cumbersome burden of the past. The recognition of this tension arising from an uncertain handling of a highly charged subject matter, is a recognition of the way a regressive visual mobility is used dialectically to include a regressive fatiguing, emotionally heavy or depressing content. It also shows how regressive means are used to fight the pedantic weight of past might be achieved. In other words to fight 'fire with fire'.

All the new painters have regressed in order to find clues to contend with the recent past, Rupertz's shifting Dithyrambic image are reminiscent of an Eastern symbol of meditation, these images evolve into familiar forms, with the aid of this figuration, Rupertz built the foundations for a style that describes social realities without illustrating them. He remains omnipresent in the paintings as prime mover. His intensiveness was reactionary against American abstraction, however, he did acknowledge, like Baselitz and Kiefer the work of Jackson Pollock for surface qualities of paint, however, he refused to become a decadent under study for the Americans. His Shifting Stylistic base is the ironic embodiment of an 'already ironically conceived decadence and degeneracy. For Rupertz these methods are necessary to avoid creeping stagnation, while Rupertz is conceptually restless, Baselitz is restless in his touch, there is an absurd tone in the work, common to both painters with Rupertz's shifting style Dithyrambic shapes Alice in Wonderland eccentricities and Baselitz's

turvy inverted images. Baselitz thinks of his work as abstract, arguing that the affect of his inversions free the audience from associations aroused by the traditional. (portrait subject matter). Baselitz's mannerism could be a metaphor for the situation in modern Germany, a country divided against itself. This is much of the subject matter in New German painting today, Peuck who only recently came to Germany, contemplates border crossing obsessively in his work, the land of his childhood the land that he grew up in. This is common ground amongst the major artists of the post war generation.

Immendorf deals with this explicitly where the two words are epitomized in the contrasting allegorical columns in his Cafe Deustland Series, supporting the roof of this recurring subject, we can see all the major painters have used iconography and stylistic methods as part of their work.

Kiefer has shown the most hardheaded attempt to create a new art out of his very "Germanness", by stylistically aligning himself with the German romantic tradition of the nineteenth century. He is the closest to arriving at a new visual language used on the native belonging to the earth, the emotional and the irrational, the essence of the romantic movement in Germany. Yet every work he produces, however, superficially different from the last, is unmistakably stamped with his own identity. Kiefer has come up with a true radical art of today.

CONCLUSION

The art world has been indoctrinated with a distorted ideology of art and, for too long has believed that the Avant-Garde of the sixties and seventies is seen as a strict apolistic succession of construction and formal abstraction, painting showing its indifference to the world - historical by becoming militantly abstract, and the German spirit thought it could make world history by becoming aggressive in the name of abstract ideas, aiming for excessive purity a fallacy.

Kiefer and the new German painters are demanding a free attitude towards reality. Their reality is to contend with their national history, in a quest to re-establish and honest German identity.

The result of Kiefer's struggle is a strong powerful art loaded with sensuality. It is reaching back into the primordial German past of myth and pathos. The past which created a false Germanic myth of a German culture with an elitist sense of an exclusive relationship to spiritual depths.

The new painters have used traditionalist methods and artistic reference of the past. But they are not traditionalists, they they have salvaged the past and with the combination of tradition and innovation their art work has a refreshing effect of a peculiar vitality, it shocks the art world, weighed down by formalism which has out-lived its existence.

Kiefers approach is a conceptual one, but he responds to this in a sensual manner. What emerges is an abstract sensuality, within this is a dialectical experience of historical reality.

His paintings are sensual, conceptual pieces in which there are elements conflicting within a dynamic structure. His aim is to let the conflict, the contradiction speak for itself demonstrated artistically. Confusion slippages and discrepancies may occur and to add the cacaphony, there is no harmony, this discord will never resolve, but in the recognition of this there is a universal warning that to avoid reality is a dangerous and destructive course to take.

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