

Anselm Kiefer

FONDATION BEYELER

Basel

This exceptional show highlighted three decades of painting by Anselm Kiefer, offering an overview of the German artist's conceptual concerns and muscular use of materials. While Kiefer first gained notice for using iconography relating to his country's Nazi past, his recent work alludes to a history that is more archaic and universal.

Most powerful were the colossal, late-1990s tableaux. They skate the line between painting and sculpture, their surfaces covered with such materials as terra-cotta, sand, iron, shellac, and emulsion. Dominating the entry hall at 15 feet tall and nearly twice as wide, a 1997 painting of an ancient pyramid—*Dein und Mein Alter und die Alter der Welt* (Your Age and My Age and the Age of the World)—was the exhibition's showstopper. The monument appears almost life-size, its stratified layers seem to dissolve into each other as they rise to their apex. Up close, the peeling and scorched paint (Kiefer sometimes uses a blowtorch) is tangibly organic, recalling the look and texture of an insect's discarded carapace.

Dating from the same year, two massive brown-hued paintings with distressed surfaces faced each other in the main gallery, both showing abandoned temples (or palaces) almost obliterated by the desert winds and sand enveloping them. Here, Kiefer creates a powerful paradox: the images are timeless, yet the pieces themselves seem to be decaying.

Less evocative were the "Attic Paintings" of the 1970s, with icons relating to the Third Reich and appearing bluntly symbolic. Kiefer's more recent "Star Paintings" depict fantastical constellations with astronomical notations inscribed on the canvases and tiny pieces of lead and withered sunflowers embedded in the surfaces. However, in this presentation, these paintings lacked the monumental power of his large 1997 pieces or the grace of the recent gouaches. —*Marc Spiegler*

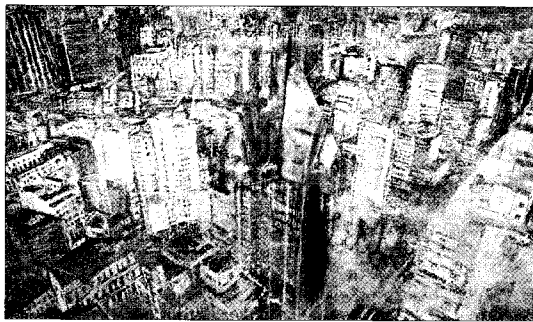
Catherine Opie

STEPHEN FRIEDMAN

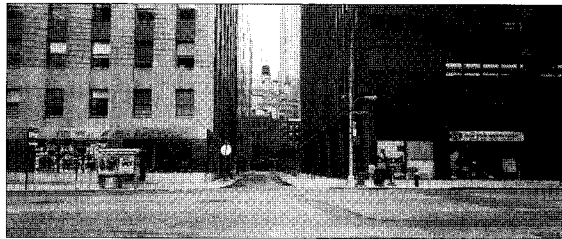
London

American photographer Catherine Opie, best known for her jolting portraits of Los Angeles lesbians, transvestites, and transsexuals, traveled to the East Coast to capture New York's Wall Street and its environs. The results shown here were inspired and haunting.

Although the photos were taken before September 11, it is difficult not to perceive Opie's black-and-white images in the context of those events. In fact, they seem ominously prescient. Shot at dawn, they portray a Lower Manhattan bereft of people, embalmed in



Anselm Kiefer, *Lilith*, 1997, emulsion, shellac, acrylic, lead, hair, and ash on canvas. 11' x 18 1/2'. Fondation Beyeler.



Catherine Opie, *Untitled #5 (Wall Street)*, 2001, black-and-white Iris print on paper, 22" x 47". Stephen Friedman.



Gérard Garouste, *Ellipse*, 1999-2001, acrylic on canvas with iron and bronze, installation view. Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain.

a gray haze, and eerie in its emptiness. Rubbish blows about like tumbleweed through a ghost town. Receding into the distance, long and tapering streets seem suffocatingly narrow. The statue of the grandee on the steps of Federal Hall gestures extravagantly toward no one. Buildings rear up behind one another, jostling for attention. Street signs—

stop, no parking, one way, no standing—point in different directions, but without humans to address they offer contradictory instructions in an absurdist universe of maximum misunderstanding. On William Street, a bus stop leans drunkenly, as if suffering from the excesses of the night before.

There is a terrible thirst for humanity in these pictures and a terrible perplexity at its absence. Opie has a superb command of her craft and a poetic vision of the American landscape. —*Michael Glover*

Gérard Garouste

FONDATION CARTIER POUR L'ART CONTEMPORAIN AND DANIEL TEMPLON

Paris

Since the 1970s, French artist Gérard Garouste has been reanimating the grand tradition of history painting, interpreting

stories from literature, religion, and mythology with radiant panache. Two of his previous major projects include painted scenes from *Don Quixote* and the Jewish Haggadah.

For the Fondation Cartier, he created a dazzling 20-foot-tall tentlike construction titled *Ellipse* (1999-2001), its canvas flaps painted with animals and humans acting out enigmatic dramas. Visitors could enter and exit the tent to look at its 54 painted panels, each variously depicting allegorical scenes,

bizarre creatures, and incomprehensible phrases. A naked, headless dwarf stands with his hands on his hips. A lion with a human body follows a donkey with the face of a bearded man.

At Daniel Templon gallery, where recent gouache studies and oil paintings were simultaneously presented, more hybrids, savages, and madmen were in evidence, their distorted faces stretched out as if made from Silly Putty, their arms spilling out of open mouths. While Garouste's paint handling recalls the expressive figuration of El Greco or Goya, his figures suggest the monsters of Bosch or Dalí.

Garouste draws on innumerable sources—including the Bible, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, myths, and fables—to craft scenes that are ultimately of his own imagination. It is his calculated lack of narrative that permits viewers to impose their own ideas and fantasies.

—*Laurie Attias*

ADAM ZEFERKA