

## Inside Art



JEANIE AMBROSIO

Anselm Kiefer, above, installing “Die Erdzeitalter (Ages of the World)” at the Warehouse in Miami.

### A Kiefer Retrospective

Miami’s art museums are grabbing headlines with splashy staff hires and well-heeled additions to their boards. Yet when it comes to actual artwork, the city’s marquee collectors — and their personally run exhibition spaces — continue to steal the show. The latest example of “The Miami Model”? A sprawling retrospective from the German blue-chip artist Anselm Kiefer that fills nearly a quarter of the 45,000-square-foot Margulies Collection at the Warehouse — a garment factory transformed into a showcase for art holdings of the real estate developer Mar-

tin Margulies.

The exhibit opens Wednesday, but “it will be up forever,” Mr. Margulies said. “If you think I ever want to go through this again . . .” he trailed off, motioning to the flurry of activity throughout the Warehouse this week. Mr. Kiefer directed a small army of art handlers whirring about on hydraulic lifts, racing to install an array of 25,000-pound detritus-filled sculptures, 10-foot-high neo-runic paintings, and charcoal wall inscriptions, just hours before a dinner benefiting the Lotus House homeless shelter. The works include the new sculpture, “Ages of the World,” a

17-foot stack of 400 unfinished canvases, lead books, rubble and dried sunflowers.

Mr. Margulies played down the show being any kind of aesthetic shot across the bow of the Pérez Art Museum Miami, despite his public feud with that institution over its continuing to receive millions in tax dollars from a struggling community rather than relying solely on private contributors. Instead, Mr. Margulies hoped visiting schoolchildren would learn from Mr. Kiefer’s handiwork: Don’t let meager materials limit your vision. “They should realize this is the creative process of an artist.”

Mr. Kiefer, 70, remains a controversial figure within the art world, alternately lionized and denounced for artwork invoking both World War II Germany and the kabbalah. Some see transcendent statements, others a reduction of the Jewish experience to kitsch. Both factions will find plenty of grist at the Warehouse, where Mr. Kiefer’s works refer to everything from the poet and Nazi labor camp survivor Paul Celan to the Old Testament’s Lilith.

“Important work always creates polarization,” Mr. Kiefer explained. “The victims understand. Those people who see in me a glorifier of fascism — when you look into them, you find they have something to hide themselves.” As for the distinction between having his work shown in a “private” versus public museum, Mr. Kiefer hoped the former would proliferate. Collectors should be free to bypass museum curators, he said, and lavishly pursue their own tastes. He compared the phenomenon with the early 20th-century construction of public libraries by moguls like Andrew Carnegie: “I think it was J. P. Morgan who said, ‘If you die rich, it’s a mistake.’” **BRETT SOKOL**