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Anselm Kiefer's 'Ages of the World' sculpture now on view at the Israel Museum

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ANSELM KIEFER'S monumental sculpture 'Die Erdzeitalter (Ages of the World).'

(photo credit: ISRAEL MUSEUM)

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Anselm Kiefer's monumental sculpture *Die Erdzeitalter* (*Ages of the World*) has just gone on display at the [Israel Museum](#), as part of the museum's 60th anniversary year.

Standing 5 meters (17 feet) tall and composed of stacked canvases, dried sunflowers, boulders, lead books, and earth, the work arrived in Jerusalem as an important gift from American collector and philanthropist Martin Z. Margulies.

Facilitated by the American Friends of the Israel Museum and the Martin Z. Margulies Foundation, the donation reflects both the museum's and Margulies's longstanding relationships with the German painter and sculptor, whose work reflects the immensity of history, collective memory, and the impact of war.

A new permanent work at the Israel Museum

Installed as a permanent work, *Die Erdzeitalter* is intended to be an immersive encounter with Kiefer's ongoing meditation on history, memory, and time itself. The sculpture resembles a vertical accumulation of ruins, a precarious pile that evokes geological strata while also calling to mind biblical and mythic structures such as the [Tower of Babel](#) and Jacob's Ladder. It is flanked by two large paintings bearing inscriptions that refer to prehistoric eras. The inscriptions are meant to push viewers to think back beyond human history.

Kiefer, born in [Germany](#) in 1945 and now living and working in France, has built a career on confronting the aftermath of war and the weight of collective memory. His works often incorporate unconventional materials – lead, straw, ash, earth – that seem to carry both physical and symbolic heaviness. In *Die Erdzeitalter*, these materials are stacked and compressed, suggesting both the accumulation of centuries and the fragility of civilizations layered one atop another.



The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (credit: Zohar Shemesh)

For Jerusalem museumgoers, the installation may be particularly meaningful. The Israel Museum has a long history with Kiefer's work, dating back to 1984, when then-curator of contemporary art Suzanne Landau organized a solo exhibition of his work. Kiefer's visits to Israel around that time proved formative, influencing his later engagement with the Hebrew Bible and the mystical traditions of Kabbalah. Over the years, the museum has acquired several of his key works, including *Aaron*, inspired by the Judean Desert and the [Exodus story](#), and *Lilith's Tochter* (Lilith's Daughters), which draws on Jewish folklore. *Die Erdzeitalter* now becomes the fourth Kiefer work in the museum's collection.

Landau, now director of the museum, said, "Since the beginning of his artistic practice, the work of Anselm Kiefer has helped process complex questions around cultural memory and life in landscapes impacted by war, putting our humanity in context with the immensity and unknowability of the universe we share. We are deeply grateful to the Margulies Collection for their generosity in bringing *Die Erdzeitalter* to Jerusalem and enabling our community to experience this deeply resonant, awe-inspiring work."

The sculpture was originally created for a major retrospective of Kiefer's work at the Royal Academy in London in 2014. After that exhibition, it was acquired by Margulies and installed in a specially designed space at the Margulies Collection at the Warehouse in Miami, where a permanent display of monumental Kiefer works has been on view since 2015.

For Margulies, whose collection is considered one of the most significant private holdings of contemporary art in the US, the decision to donate the work was rooted in a philosophy of placing art where it will be understood and respected.

"One of the most important factors in donating works of art is to align with institutions that respect the artist, a principle that has guided me across over 40 years of giving," said Margulies. "I couldn't be more pleased with this incredible work becoming part of the Israel Museum's collection, particularly given its long history of deep engagement with Kiefer's practice and its 60 years of excellence in the region."

As the Israel Museum marks six decades as a leader of Israeli culture, the arrival of *Die Erdzeitalter* underscores its commitment to presenting complex art that demands engagement on the part of the viewer.