



Anselm Kiefer, *Vainämöinen Ilmarinen*, 2018, emulsion, oil, acrylic, shellac, rope and lead on canvas, 280 x 380 cm, Gösta Serlachius Fine Arts Foundation, copyright: © Anselm Kiefer.

Press release 16 January 2020

## Important acquisition for Finland

### Anselm Kiefer's artwork *Vainämöinen Ilmarinen* to Serlachius Museums

Gösta Serlachius Fine Arts Foundation has acquired for its collection Anselm Kiefer's artwork *Vainämöinen Ilmarinen*. It is the first of Kiefer's *Kalevala*-theme works be sold to a museum collection.

Anselm Kiefer, one of the most prominent names in contemporary art, explores in his works the great issues of humankind, drawing on history, literature and philosophy. The *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic poem, has also long made an impression on Kiefer: "I read the *Kalevala* in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Recently, I again turned my attention to the *Kalevala*'s verses and also painted works inspired by the epic."

Kiefer explains that he is interested in backgrounds: "The *Kalevala*, the *Song of the Nibelungs*, Ancient Egyptian fables and other mythologies seek to understand and describe the world as a whole. Such a comprehensive description of the world is difficult today, because science and various professions have packed the world into silos. The world is fragmented, and we do not see it as a whole. One of the new areas of natural science, string theory, does however seek to provide an overall picture of the world, in which the microcosm and macrocosm meet, just as in ancient mythologies, like the *Kalevala*".

When Kiefer's *Kalevala*-theme works will be completed is not yet known. Currently, one work on the theme is on display at the White Cube Gallery in London.

**Pauli Sivonen**, Director of Serlachius Museums, is delighted with the acquisition: "The permanent presence of the work in Mänttä is a natural continuation of the collaboration between Anselm Kiefer and Serlachius that began with the major exhibition in 2015."

The artwork *Väinämöinen Ilmarinen* came to Serlachius via the United States. Kiefer donated the work to a fund-raising campaign for an extension to the Albright-Knox Art Museum, directed by **Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén** ([www.albrightknox.org](http://www.albrightknox.org)). Sirén proposed that the work not be auctioned but offered to Finnish public collections, initially to Serlachius, the museum that had organised a major Kiefer exhibition a few years earlier. This way the work could end up in Finland, the home of the *Kalevala* and Finnish *Kalevala* art.

Sirén has been studying Kiefer's art for nearly thirty years. When Kiefer established an art foundation a couple of years ago to foster his life's work and research on it, he invited Sirén to be its Chairman of the Board. Sirén has served in the position, alongside his work as a museum director, since 2018.

"Mythology, poetry, philosophy, world history and wars – these themes are the ocean that washes through Kiefer's art. He does not paint individual series of works, although in a certain way each theme addressed by the artist can be perceived as a kind of ensemble, at least in connection with museum exhibitions. In Kiefer's art, different sources and themes are interlinked and are part of a great continuum. One day, Kiefer's *Kalevala* works could be brought together into a magnificent exhibition and, of course, it would be interesting to see it in Finland, too, where the *Kalevala* is the national epic, but also a partially forgotten spiritual and cultural resource," explains Sirén.

Anselm Kiefer's works are often monumental in their themes and dimensions. *Väinämöinen Ilmarinen* is also a large-scale work. It features, characteristically for Kiefer, a desolate landscape resembling a battlefield, with a submarine and aircraft in the foreground: the seer Väinämöinen is depicted as a submarine, the creator of the heavens, and blacksmith Ilmarinen as an aircraft.

The work will be on display at Serlachius Museum Gösta in the end of March.

For further information, please contact:

Pauli Sivonen, Director of Serlachius Museums, tel. +358 50 566 1355, [pauli.sivonen@serlachius.fi](mailto:pauli.sivonen@serlachius.fi)

Susanna Yläjärvi, Information Officer, tel. +358 50 560 0156, [susanna.ylajarvi@serlachius.fi](mailto:susanna.ylajarvi@serlachius.fi)

Image:

Anselm Kiefer, *Väinämöinen Ilmarinen*, 2018, emulsion, oil, acrylic, shellac, rope and lead on canvas, 280 x 380 cm, copyright: © Anselm Kiefer

The Serlachius Museums are open:

in the winter season 1 September–31 May, from Tuesday to Sunday 11 am–6 pm

in the summer season 1 June–31 August, every day 10 am–6 pm

Visiting addresses:

Serlachius Museum Gösta, Joenniementie 47, 35800 Mänttä, Finland

Serlachius Museum Gustaf, R. Erik Serlachiuksen katu 2, 35800 Mänttä, Finland