

PRESS RELEASE

ANSELM KIEFER ***Odi Navali***

Opening Sunday January 22, 2006, 11. 00 a.m.
Lia Rumma , Naples

Odi Navali (Naval Odes) is the title that has been chosen by Anselm Kiefer for his personal exhibition at the Lia Rumma Gallery in Naples. The titles selected by the German artist are never randomly chosen but are always laden with meaning and are closely connected to themes taken from history, literature and philosophy. In this case, the title refers to the expression used by the poet Gabriele d'Annunzio in 1893 for his collection of ten poems inspired by the death of the admiral Simone Pacoret di Saint-Bon, minister for the Italian Navy and a hero at the battle of Vis.

The stormy sea is the main theme of the three large canvases on show in the exhibition and it takes on the form of a preponderant dark mass, occupying almost the entire surface. In *Mare Nostrum*, the profiles of five ships made out of lead, a reference to the Italian navy, overlap each other on the oxidised canvas. Apart from the central vessel and the one situated on the threshold of the horizon, the other three float in the air, moving beyond the separation between earth and sky, and underline the pairing of the spiritual and the material, which is a constant feature in the artist's work. In *Hero und Leander*, painted in 2005, the only ship depicted appears in the centre of the canvas at the mercy of the waves; instead of the ships, the third canvas, entitled *Melancholia*, depicts a transparent prism which materialises in the rough seas and the intersection of the vertices of the solid correspond precisely to the astronomical coordinates of the stars in the night sky. The prism is also found in other works of the same title, usually associated with a famous engraving by Albert Dürer entitled *Melancholy*, a reference to the temptation of human beings to give in to feelings of melancholy and anxiety.

The artist treats the matter in an aggressive fashion and transforms it so that the surface becomes irregular and the colours change, while the presence of organic matter, which is frequently dried and thus bereft of its vital energy, becomes a sort of wide-ranging metaphor of reality in a state of decay.

Anselm Kiefer was born in Donaueschingen, Germany in 1945. He has frequently dealt with themes related to the post-war period in Germany, making use of values and symbols which belong to the national identity of the German people. In 1991 the artist left Germany for good to move to Barjac, a small town in the south of France where he currently lives and works.

Kiefer is one of the key figures on the contemporary art scene. His works are exhibited in the most important museums in the world and form part of some of the most prestigious private art collections. Among the various personal exhibitions held in the last year, particularly worthy of mention are the colossal permanent installation which inaugurated the space of the Pirelli RE at the Bicocca Hangar in Milan, the personal exhibition at Villa Medici in Rome and the travelling exhibition which opened last September at the Modern Art Museum at Fort Worth, Texas, and which will continue this year in the museums of Montréal in Canada, the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington and the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco. Further personal exhibitions are planned for 2007 at the Pompidou Centre in Paris and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.