

Anselm Kiefer

Velimir Chlebnikov. Zeit, Maß der Welt (Velimir Chlebnikov. Time, Measure of the World), 2004

Mixed media, oil, chalk, and lead
Hall Collection

No. 32

Velimir Chlebnikov was a Russian Futurist poet whose mystical theories were inspired by esoteric mathematical calculations. Among his many ideas, he believed that every three hundred and seventeen years climactic sea battles occur, and that these hold cosmic significance for the fate of humanity.

In this seascape Anselm Kiefer refers to Chlebnikov's theories. At the top, a handwritten inscription in German references the calculations underlying the Russian Futurist's propositions. As in many of Kiefer's works, here he blends paint with other materials, including rust, dirt, straw, sand, and even a toy boat. Although Kiefer acknowledges that Chlebnikov's theory is improbable, the Russian Futurist's broader themes, of creation, destruction, and regeneration, are central to his work.

Mythic themes are also seen in Kiefer's first site-specific outdoor public sculpture in the U.S., the 20-foot-tall *Uraeus*. Made of lead, it is cast in the form of a monumental open book with outstretched eagle's wings, atop a column embraced by a large snake. *Uraeus* will remain on view in Rockefeller Plaza from May 2 to July 22, 2018.