

Marlborough

PRESS RELEASE

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MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ ANSELM KIEFER

on view from 29 September 2020
Appointments encouraged, mask required for entry

I like the surface of threads that I make, every square inch differs from the others, as in the creations of nature. I am interested in the scale of tensions that arises among the various shapes which I place in space. I am interested in every tangle of thread and rope and every possibility of transformation. I am not interested in the practical usefulness of my work.

– Magdalena Abakanowicz, 1971

NEW YORK, NEW YORK The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are delighted to welcome the public back to our Chelsea gallery for the opening of the autumn season. On view is an exhibition of artwork at once timely and representative of a particular historical thread throughout the long trajectory of Marlborough's storied legacy, since its founding in 1946 following the Second World War.

Installed on the first floor is a group of works by two artists deeply engaged in a postwar vernacular of fractured rebirth: Magdalena Abakanowicz (Polish, 1930-2017) and Anselm Kiefer (German, b. 1945). Beyond echoes of trauma and anguish materialized in their diverse bodies of work, each artist expanded the scope of their respective practice out of a parallel necessity.



Abakanowicz, *Untitled*, 1971-72
sisal weaving
55 7/8 x 85 3/8 x 6 1/4 in. / 142 x 217 x 16 cm

Abakanowicz, who joined Marlborough in 1989, is widely recognized for her installations of bronze and burlap standing figures, called 'crowds', whose uncanny burlap exteriors bear the distinct markings of the artist's handiwork, like scars and sutures on human skin. Amidst shifting social tides of recent years, a number of museums have enriched their collections to include her fiber works, which had been dismissed previously as craft. These historical revisions will be addressed in the artist's forthcoming retrospective at Tate Modern.

In the 1960s, Abakanowicz taught herself how to dye and weave discarded rope to create immense, suspended, anatomical forms within her small living space in Warsaw. In spite of the humble nature of her materials, these works achieved an architectural scale that defied classification. It was this obfuscation, in fact, that allowed Abakanowicz to export her works out of the soviet bloc—as 'craft,' no less—and to exhibit them in the West as sculpture. *Anna* and *Helena* of 1964, both on view, are such pieces, for which the artist was awarded the Grand Prix at the Biennial of São Paulo when they were first shown in 1965. In 2008, she would recall:

The [works] made the trip to Brazil without me. [With] no passport, no money for my trip... I remained at home — empty, absent. No energy as all of it had been integrated into those huge soft forms being my protest against categories in art. When I learned that I had received the Grand Prize, I found it an offence, a mistake, a misunderstanding... Finally, it was explained to me that I was being rewarded for my 'discoveries.'

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continued

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Anselm Kiefer's work serves as a German counterpoint to Abakanowicz's wounded presences. His work materializes a conscious, reactionary vision of the occupation and decimation that shaped Abakanowicz's native Poland during the war. In spite of their opposing origins, both artists transmute bleak, tormented realities into works of mythical frailty. As in the boundary-pushing textile works of Abakanowicz, Kiefer's work evinces his steadfast belief in art's transgressive potential.

'Artists are border dwellers,' he said in a 2013 interview, 'experts in transgressing boundaries as well as specialists in drawing borders.' In *Ich halte alle Indien in meiner Hand* (2003), the viewer can sense the textural richness of Kiefer's impasto that appears as ruptured earth, desert ground, confluent with the protruding, oxidized, cages that create new spaces within and beyond themselves. There is in this work, expressed through the presence of the suspended burlap hand, an allusion to touch, captivity, and freedom above all else.

The exhibition will remain on view through November and will be accompanied by a forthcoming catalogue. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 6 pm. Appointments are encouraged. To schedule an appointment, please call (212) 541-4900, or write info@marlboroughgallery.com. It is essential that guests wear a mask and observe the 6-foot social distancing rule at all times when interacting with our staff or other visitors. For sales inquiries, please contact mny@marlboroughgallery.com.

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