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Mr. Greco

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Art is the Greatest Historian

In "Naming the Disappeared, Raising the Dead" Doris Salcedo, a Columbian artist, brings up the importance of political art. She writes about the importance of remembering victims in crises. Salcedo explains that victims of crises are dehumanized and that art matters because art gives humanity to those victims. Anselm Kiefer is a great example of this. He has created lots of art relating to German history and the horror of the Holocaust. He created art about parts of history that people wanted to forget or are not talked about. His painting's *The Museum*, *Winter Landscape*, and *Horror Vacui* especially illustrate this and are great examples of why art matters because of its ability to illustrate history in a deeper way especially in crises.



Kiefer, Anselm. "Das Museum (the Museum)." *SFMOMA*, 12 Sept. 2023,
www.sfmoma.org/artwork/FC.522/.

The Museum 1992 is a piece made with paint, ash and lead. This artwork shows a museum that's decaying and it also looks as if the canvas it is on is decaying as well. Kiefer creates this feeling of decay by evoking movement through making the painting look like it's actively falling apart and having pieces of lead hanging off of it and a rough texture that the lead creates. Kiefer also uses a variety of materials like lead and ash which evokes ideas of war and battle and more specifically what's left after those things. That idea coupled with the decay makes the painting seem like it's forgetting the horrors of war. This is further demonstrated by the emphasis on the museum in the center. This emphasis is created by having the museum having most of the color in the painting and being the only part of the painting with a discernible shape. A museum is used to make sure things aren't forgotten and having it decaying is furthering the idea that memory is fading. This exemplifies Salcedo's message because it is reminding us in a powerful way that we cannot forget history and especially war.



Kiefer, Anselm. "Anselm Kiefer: Winter Landscape." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/486573. Accessed 8 Oct. 2023.

Another painting by Kiefer is *Winter Landscape* which depicts a much more realistic scene of a landscape. The painting puts emphasis on the huge floating head in the center of the painting. The size proportionally to the landscape makes the head stand out. Kiefer also uses movement to achieve the emphasis by having the landscape lead toward the center. He also uses color to accentuate the floating head by putting red on the neck which also signifies blood which drips down throughout the painting also leading the eye toward the head. Kiefer uses space in the painting through the snow which is white and doesn't have much paint or texture on it creating an environment that looks bleak and unhappy. The head is representative of the earth

and so is the landscape and they are both bleeding possibly because of war or violence, and the blood is representative of the evils of humanity and this painting symbolizes the effect war has on the land and the people living there. This relates to Doris Salcedo's message because this brings up an untold story like how Salcedo argues that the purpose of art is to tell stories that are forgotten or covered up especially in places in crisis. This untold story is of the environmental impacts of war.



Kiefer, Anselm. "Anselm Kiefer: Horror Vacui." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 1 Jan. 1980, www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/486550.

The painting *horror vacui* is a painting of a photograph of WWII refugees. It uses a variety of shapes and shades of paint splattered all over the painting making it feel cluttered and chaotic.

It uses cool colors to illustrate the sorrowful mood of the subjects and the chaotic movement of the paint splatters further express the uncertainty of the future of the refugees. The painting has emphasis on the title horror vacui which means fear of the void. This could also describe the emotions of the refugees as their journey ahead is a complete unknown. This highly emotional piece is demonstrative of Salcedo's message because it tells a story through abstract means that could not be told without the use of art. It gives life to people who would have been a statistic to most of us and highlights the importance of art.

These pieces of art are great examples of Salcedo's reasoning for the importance of art. They each in their own separate ways remember history in a beautiful and powerful way. Kiefer's use of lead and ash and other materials gives his paintings a dark and stern look and are emblematic of the themes he takes on in his paintings. Kiefer gives a look at history that was uncomfortable for most, especially at the time when he created them and forced people to face that history and continues to do so today.

