



Over Your Cities Grass Will Grow

Sophie Fiennes

UNITED KINGDOM/France/
THE NETHERLANDS, 2010
French, German

105 minutes ■ Colour/D-Cinema
Production Company: Amoeba Film Ltd/
Kasander, Sciapode
Producer: Sophie Fiennes, Kees Kasander,
Emilie Blezat
Cinematographer: Remko Schnorr
Editor: Ethel Shepherd
Sound: Bram Boers
With: Anselm Kiefer, Klaus Dermutz

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Anselm Kiefer's monumental artwork explodes into the spaces it inhabits. Dirt and twisted metal, wildly thick impasto and found garbage compete within the rhythms of grand painterly gestures. His themes are volatile and confrontational, often addressing his native Germany's Nazi past and the ravages of the Holocaust through the lens of poetry (Paul Celan is an acknowledged influence) and the Kaballah. In an era dominated by clever conceptualism, his work consistently evokes uncharacteristically strong emotions in the museums and galleries where it is exhibited.

Sophie Fiennes loves a challenge. Her playful portrait of Slavoj Žižek in *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* captured the mercurial intelligence and cinephilia of one of the great thinkers of our age. She meets Kiefer head-on, with a wilful strength and uncompromising spirit, entering his world without concession and making a grand gesture of her own – part tribute, part deconstruction – to this great and complex artist.

Over Your Cities Grass Will Grow begins with a thunderous introduction to Kiefer's workspace – a gargantuan industrial sprawl in Barjac, France – with a particular focus on its subterranean chambers and corridors. Two pivotal long takes follow: one watches Kiefer make a large-scale painting with his crew; the other spies on a cat-and-mouse interview with a German journalist. (Kiefer, of course, is the cat.) Throughout, various landscapes loom large, as Fiennes's

camera stretches the stunning Scope frame at every opportunity.

What emerges is a portrait of a man of enormous depth who is willing to provoke the people around him – to wake them up to the potentially tragic fate of art and culture in our society. Kiefer seeks to exorcise the demons of the twentieth century, and it's unclear whether he seeks absolution for us or just himself. The medicine he serves is seldom sweet, and Fiennes's film is not an easygoing journey, but it is certainly an invigorating one. Art rarely hits your guts quite like this.

■ Noah Cowan



Sophie Fiennes was born in Suffolk, England and studied at the Chelsea College of Art and Design. She worked with Peter Greenaway for several years before directing the documentaries *Lars From 1 - 10* (98), *The Late Michael Clark* (00), *Because I Sing* (01), *Hoover Street Revival* (03) and *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (06), which screened at the Festival. *Over Your Cities Grass Will Grow* (10) is her latest feature documentary.