

Fergus McCaffrey, St. Barth
Sigmar Polke
March 18 – May 30, 2015

Fergus McCaffrey, St. Barth is proud to present *Sigmar Polke*, an exhibition of drawings, paintings, and manipulated photocopies that span Polke's extensive career. This is the gallery's fourth exhibition of the late artist's work, following *Sigmar Polke / Andy Warhol: Drawings 1962–65* (2006), *Sigmar Polke* (2011), and *Sigmar Polke: Photocopierarbeiten* (2014).

Polke's work resists easy categorization as throughout his career he employed a wide range of materials, techniques, and subject matter. Amongst the most influential and revered artists of the second half of the 20th Century, Polke reinvented painting, photography, and drawing and influenced four generations of artists. He worked between figuration and abstraction, fused and corrupted popular culture and high art, and pioneered an entirely new visual domain.

The artist came to West Germany in 1953 to escape from the food shortages and deprivation of Soviet occupied East Germany. Memories of this time, combined with his early encounters with West German popular culture, resonate in the drawings he made a decade later, all of which are thoroughly infused with his savage sense of humor. This mix of divergent influences led Polke to explore a sort of no-man's-land of Capitalist Realism. Here heroically workaday grocery store items – shoe polish, sausages, bread rolls – and expressions of petit bourgeois longings – foreign travel, handbags, fashionable shoes – receive equal attention, sketched with a spontaneous directness of vision and economy of means. Although mediated through newspapers and magazines, these groundbreaking drawings convey the 1960s zeitgeist in a way that is simultaneously poignant, heartfelt, and mocking.

Polke spent the 1970s polluting the photographic processes to extraordinary effect, and this deliberate corruption of the mechanisms of reproduction foreshadowed the arrival of the photocopier to his studio in the early 1990s. Forcing error and embracing chance, Polke spent hours and days dragging, compressing, enlarging and reducing found images on the scan bed of the photocopier to produce hallucinogenic extruded and contorted forms—pushing images to the point of obliteration. As John Kelsey has noted, a photocopy became a “hybrid medium somewhere between drawing and photography, a sort of electronic frottage” (*Sigmar Polke: Alibis 1963–2010*, p. 232). These works became known as *Photocopierarbeiten*.

Painting was a life-long concern for Polke, and after a hiatus during the 1970s, he returned to it in earnest in the early 1980s, using many of the same photo-chemicals and processes from his photographic practice to create new innovative techniques. Both in the late 1960s and the 1980s he was drawn to painting on kitschy drapery-store bought fabrics to which he applied resin, photo-chemicals, light and temperature sensitive pigments, crushed mineral stones, and meteorites. In parallel Polke began to paint on translucent fabrics where multiple layers of imagery could be overlaid, creating complex fusions of abstraction and figuration.

Polke was born in 1941 in Oels, Silesia (East Germany, now Poland). At age twelve Polke moved to Düsseldorf, where he studied at the Kunstakademie and produced his first work.

He began exhibiting in the mid 1960s. In 1978 he moved to Cologne where he maintained his studio until his death in 2010. His work has been the subject of countless museum exhibitions, and currently, the retrospective exhibition *Sigmar Polke: Alibis 1963–2010*, which was organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Tate Modern, London is on view at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany through July 5, 2015.

About Fergus McCaffrey

Founded in 2006, Fergus McCaffrey is internationally recognized for its groundbreaking role promoting the work of post-war Japanese artists, as well as a quality roster of select contemporary European and American artists. Fergus McCaffrey's rigorous, thoughtful approach is marked by a commitment to discovery, often presenting the work of artists previously unrepresented or misrepresented. Dublin-born founder Fergus McCaffrey has been instrumental in introducing post-war Japanese art to a Western market, including Natsuyuki Nakanishi, and Gutai artists Sadamasa Motonaga and Kazuo Shiraga. The gallery also exhibits the work of seminal Western artists, including Andy Warhol, Birgit Jürgenssen, William Scott, Richard Nonas, Gary Rough, Jack Early and Sigmar Polke.

Chelsea, NY based Fergus McCaffrey opened a second gallery location on the Caribbean island of St. Barthélemy in November 2014. The gallery's third location opens in Tokyo in 2015.

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