

*Sigmar Polke*

January 11 – February 19, 2011

McCaffrey Fine Art is proud to present *Sigmar Polke*, an exhibition of drawings, paintings, and photographs that span the career of the late artist. On view will be a selection of rare and intimate drawings from the 1960s, a suite of photographs, and several monumental paintings from the 1980s and 90s. The exhibition will be on view from January 11 through February 19, 2011.

Polke's work resists easy categorization, employing a wide range of materials, techniques, and subject matter. Polke often used ephemeral materials, such as wax, smoke on glass, and pigments that would break down and deteriorate over time. He painted directly on translucent fabric, and used resin, chemicals, arsenic and meteor fragments in various works.

Every decade Polke reinvented his language: a humorous crude pop of the 60s; a range of photographic experiments in the 70s; and a return to painting inflected by unorthodox practices and media in the 80s and 90s. In many ways, Polke's works, and particularly his overarching project, have been seen as subversive political gestures that counter prevailing conventions in the artworld.

Early in his career, working away from mid-century modernism, Polke began borrowing from a variety of references, particularly American Pop (specifically the comic-book style and use of benday dots of Roy Lichtenstein), advertising imagery, and the actions of Joseph Beuys. Polke's works of this period, that frequently refer to food and consumer products, were ironic commentaries on the deprivations of the postwar period in Germany.

His photographic series, *Untitled*, from 1993 (?) made by placing a radioactive (?) stone against photographic paper is deliberately enigmatic. The imagery evokes both psychedelic abstraction, as well as ectoplasm, the substance purportedly released by mediums in a trance state. The photographic "staining" in these images relates to various staining motifs frequently found in Polke's painting. While these allude to abstract gestural painting on the one hand, they also refer to bodily fluids. In works such as *The Rave*, white paint spills across the canvas in a great ejaculation. Such humorous sexual connotation is also apparent in his version of a pin-up, *B-Mode*.

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.