

SIGMAR POLKE: SCHÜTTBILDER



**30 SEPTEMBER - 5 OCTOBER 2019
SIMON LEE GALLERY, LONDON**

Coinciding with Frieze London, Simon Lee Gallery is proud to announce a presentation of 'Schüttbilder', or 'Pour Paintings' by influential German artist, Sigmar Polke (1941-2010).

Amongst the most significant figures in the artistic landscape of post-war Germany, Polke was renowned for an experimental approach to painting that pushed the boundaries of both medium and material. The pursuit of chance operation and an irreverent wit are hallmarks of a career that staunchly resisted easy categorisation or alignment with any specific movement or genre. While his multidisciplinary practice encompassed innovations across photography, film, print, drawing, sculpture and performance, it was as a painter that he most thoroughly tested aesthetic convention. Polke's interrogation of the formal and material traditions of paint led to the invention of alchemical processes and a use of unorthodox substances, which created a constant dialogue between order and disorder, chaos and control, all the while addressing the cultural and historical impact of an abstract practice in two dimensions.

The Pour Paintings, a series of chiefly large-format works on paper that occupied the artist for a period of approximately 15 years, encapsulate his late-career hypothesis, in which accidents or chance effects formed the backbone of his practice. Layers of opalescent dispersion pool over matte-black grounds, creating varied chromatic effects liberated from an imitation of nature but that nonetheless evoke otherworldly imagery – vaporous clouds of gas or nebulae. These works capture Polke's fascination with the authorial process and its relationship to accident and effect. Although autonomous, the Pour Paintings are evidence of their maker's mastery of chance. Poured, spilled and splattered, the paint coalesces across the picture plane in self-determined rivulets that inspire perspectival shifts in light and space, augmented by the interaction of viscous and powdered pigment. The Pour Paintings constitute Polke's most sustained critical investigation into abstraction, drawing together the key concerns of a practice fundamentally absorbed in dismantling the language of high-modernism.

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NOTES TO EDITORS**About Sigmar Polke**

Sigmar Polke was born in Silesia, now Poland, 1941 and died in Cologne in 2010. He began his training as a glass painter, before enrolling at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf to study painting in 1961. In 1972 Polke participated in Documenta V and by 1976 his work was the subject of a major solo exhibition at the Kunsthalle Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany. Polke's prolific career has since been celebrated with numerous retrospectives, including at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France (1988); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA (1990); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (1992); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (1995); The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (1995); Kunst-und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, Germany (1997); The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (1999); Tate Modern, London, UK (2014); and Palazzo Grassi, Venice, Italy (2016). Polke received his first award, the Young German Art Prize, from the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden in 1966. His artistic contributions have since been celebrated numerous times. Polke was awarded the Grand Prize for Painting ('Golden Lion'), XLII, Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (1986); the Carnegie Prize, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA (1995); and Fellowship in the Visual Arts and Performing Arts - Criticism and Practice, Cambridge, UK (2008). His work is held in many prominent collections worldwide, including the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Norway; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France; Guggenheim Bilbao, Bilbao, Spain; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany; and Tate, London, UK.

About Simon Lee Gallery

Founded in London in 2002, Simon Lee Gallery represents artists of diverse generations whose practices explore a wide range of media, from sculpture and painting to video and photography, and who share a broad interest in an exploration of the conceptual. Aiming to provide a significant international audience for its artists, the gallery also regularly punctuates its programme with historical exhibitions and curated group shows, which present shifts in contemporary art practice and thought, whilst broadening the dialogue with artists outside of the gallery's core programme. In addition to its UK activity, in 2012 the gallery opened a space in Hong Kong, which introduced its artists to a wider public in Asia, with a fully independent programme. In 2014, Simon Lee Gallery opened an office and private viewing space in New York. In 2017, this space was re-launched with a year-round programme of exhibitions and events, showcasing the work of emerging and established artists in dynamic group and solo exhibitions.

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www.simonleegallery.com

Image: Sigmar Polke, *Untitled*, 2003, Interference colour on paper, 100 x 70 cm (39 3/8 x 27 1/2 in.)

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