

PRESS KIT

SIGMAR POLKE

17/04/2016 – 06/11/2016

CURATED BY ELENA GEUNA
AND GUY TOSATTO

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PINAULT COLLECTION

1 ABOUT THE “SIGMAR POLKE” EXHIBITION AT PALAZZO GRASSI

From April 17 to November 6 2016, Palazzo Grassi will be presenting the first retrospective show in Italy dedicated to Sigmar Polke (1941-2010). Conceived by Elena Geuna and Guy Tosatto, director of the Musée de Grenoble, in close collaboration with The Estate of Sigmar Polke, the exhibition spans the artist's entire career from the 1960s to the 2000s and underlines the variety of his artistic practice. It brings together nearly ninety works from the Pinault Collection and numerous other public and private collections.

This retrospective is part of Palazzo Grassi's exhibition programme that alternates thematic exhibitions based on the Pinault Collection and personal shows dedicated to major contemporary artists. It marks a double celebration in 2016: the 10th anniversary of the reopening of Palazzo Grassi by François Pinault and the 30th anniversary of Sigmar Polke's participation to the 1986 Venice Biennale, when he was awarded the Golden Lion.

It seemed natural to establish a connection between the two events. Indeed, Sigmar Polke always showed his affection for the city of Venice and regularly took part in the Venice Biennale. Moreover, he holds a special place in the Pinault Collection, notably thanks to the monumental work *Axial Age*, which has been presented on several occasions at Punta della Dogana.

A major artistic figure of the past fifty years, Sigmar Polke introduced profound changes to the pictorial language of the 20th century. His eternal wish to experiment spread to images – he challenged their hierarchy and questioned the way they are created – as well as to the medium – he turned the medium into an actual component of the composition – and colours – he tracked down their formal and aesthetic potentials. The artist's approach unfolds through his use of different mediums – painting and drawing, of course, but also photography, Xerox, film and installation – that intersect and are mutually enriched. It aims at the revitalisation of the subversive power of art by destabilising mechanisms of perception as much as by disrupting genres and categories.

For the 1986 Venice Biennale Sigmar Polke conceived an extraordinary installation for the German Pavilion generically entitled *Athanos*. Alchemy and politics were the two main themes that emerged from this body of work, which combined figurative or abstract paintings and installation art based on hygro-sensitive colours applied directly onto the walls, quartz and iron meteorite. These two themes form the *fil rouge* of the exhibition at Palazzo Grassi. Thereby, a mark of respect to the artist's spirit, fundamentally impervious to any process of systematisation and pre-established rule, the retrospective regularly throws off these two axes by infringing the themes and the chronology.

The exhibition opens with *Axial Age* (2005-2007), a monumental set of seven paintings (including one triptych) initially exhibited in the central pavilion at the 2007 Venice Biennale. Now presented for the first time in the atrium of Palazzo Grassi, this fascinating masterpiece is a true artistic legacy from the artist and evokes the original entanglement between visible and invisible, the discrepancies between thoughts and perception, while referring to Karl Jaspers's *Axial Age* theory.

The retrospective show then unfolds on the two floors of the museum, following a reverse chronological order from the late 2000s to the 1960s. The path is lined with exceptional bodies of work such as *Strahlen Sehen* (2007), a set of five paintings about vision and its pitfalls, *Hermes Trismegistos* (1995), a masterly evocation in four parts of the founder of alchemy, *Magische Quadrate* (1992), seven nacreous variations about magic squares and planets, *Laterna Magica* (1988-1992), composed of six panels painted on both sides like stained-glass windows, and *Negativwerte* (1982), three paintings in a dense and toxic purple. Through these works one can grasp the

ambition of Sigmar Polke's approach to the alchemy of colours and shapes developed from the 1980s on.

The artist was fond of experimenting with the pictorial matter, as one can see in the small works titled *Farbprobe*, a condensate of all possible mixtures of heterogeneous materials. He equally enjoyed playing with images, by manipulating them with a copy machine (*Für den Dritten Stand bleiben nur noch die Krümel*, 1997), by superimposing them following Picabia's example (*Alice im Wunderland*, 1972), or by breaking them up through the magnifying of the photographic frame (*Man füttert die Hühner*, 2005). With Polke, the pleasure to play is always synonym with a sense of humour and casualness.

In counterpoint to his works tackling what lies beyond appearances where representation and abstraction merge, the artist remained true to the critical approach to society he developed early in his career and continued to create paintings with strong historical and political connotations. The exhibition includes some of his most representative works, such as *Polizeischwein* (1986) and *Amerikanisch-Mexikanische Grenze* (1984), which deal with the topics of police force and borders respectively and which were both presented at the 1986 Venice Biennale, but also *Hochstand* (1984), which evokes concentration camps, and *Schiesskebab* (1994), about fratricidal wars in ex-Yugoslavia... A few works on the French Revolution, such as *Jeux d'enfants* (1988) and *Message de Marie-Antoinette à la Conciergerie* (1989), also conjure up Sigmar Polke's relationship with History.

The 1970s are represented by a beautiful selection of works that illustrate Polke's iconoclastic frenzy during this particular decade – *Cameleonardo da Willich* (1979) – and the way he used caricatures and comic books, as well as his will to experiment all out with pictorial techniques – *Untitled* (1970-1971) – and chromatic blooming with metallic paint bomb – *Indianer mit Adler* (1975). Finally, the mushrooms in *Alice im Wunderland* (1972) evoke his use of all kinds of psychotropic substances...

Throwing light on the origin of this exceptional oeuvre, the exhibition ends with Polke's artistic production from the 1960s. In *Telepathische Sitzung II (William Blake – Sigmar Polke)* (1968), one can already find evidence of the artist's interest in paranormal phenomena, while his taste for the absurd and his connections to Fluxus are apparent, notably in *Kartoffelhaus* (1967/1990), a garden hut studded with potatoes. Moreover, painting is the artist's focus in works with a photographic base in which he lays bare the mechanisms of the image – *Interieur* (1966), *Vase II* (1965) – and when he winks at the aesthetic of kitsch – *Reiherbild I* (1968) – or at the twitches of modernity – *Bohnen* (1965), *Schrank* (1963). Likewise, he tackles the issue of the material on which he paints by using printed fabric with decorative patterns that establish a dialogue with the painted subject, as in *Das Palmen-Bild* (1964) or *Lampionblumen* (1966)...

In addition to the exhibition, the *Venice Films* (1983-1986) as well as several series of photographs will be presented. A selection of Polke's most significant films will be screened at the Teatrino di Palazzo Grassi in autumn.

2 EXCERPTS FROM THE CATALOGUE

Elena Geuna, Polke. *Passages to Italy*

“The freedom with which Polke uses subjects taken from political history (such as the important series of works devoted to the French Revolution), together with others from the history of art (the reinterpretation of Franz Marc’s painting *Deer in the Forest*, 1914, in *Reh*, 1968), mystical/mathematical principles (*Magische Quadrate I–VII*, 1992) and elements from daily life and popular entertainment, such as comic book figures (for instance, the face of Eva Kant from the well-known Italian comic book *Diabolik* in *Ohne Titel (Sicherheitsverwahrung)*, 1979, and Hollywood cinema (*Indianer mit Adler*, 1975), reflects the miscellaneous, “polyglot” well-springs of the inspiration for his pictures, where nothing is too lofty or too low-brow to be included in the painting. An “omnivorous” artist, well-known for his collection of books, magazines and newspaper cuttings with typos, Polke transfers to his works his encyclopedic interests and the iconographic eclecticism of his sources, declining to elevate any particular one to the status of favorite. His art leads us into a parallel universe, in which a vast array of images and references to well-known events in our world commingle and generate fresh meanings.”

Guy Tosatto, *Three lies and a few unanswered questions*

“Sigmar Polke never loses a certain light-heartedness, a mix of humor and casualness, that saves him from becoming too serious, aware that art is not about definitive truths but rather about an incessant metamorphosis, and one which turns out to be rather like life, “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”¹ In more general terms, *Jugendstil* highlights perfectly how Polke, using anodyne or crazy images as a cover, broaches some of the most serious subjects and comments with caustic humor on the world of his contemporaries. Almost systematically refusing any interviews and having left no written trace, it is through his creative production, disguised words and from behind masks, that he delivers his artistic vision. A contradictory vision that far from favoring one particular approach or choice, on the contrary leaves questions hanging in the air, as if to signify that one sole answer is never sufficient, remaining reductive and partial. Herein, lies the complexity of a work that attempts to parallel the complexities of life. From this, his defiance towards any specific system of thought, theory, any movement... From this, his “jester” attitude, the ultimate mask, that allows him to seemingly laugh at everything, himself and above all his art, to more effectively dissimulate his profound and authentic commitment to creativity.”

Bice Curiger, *The Cosmic Crucible and Purple. Sigmar Polke in Venice*

“Venice hosted the first unmistakable appearance of alchemy in Polke’s oeuvre, as made manifest in *Athanor*, the title of his 1986 Pavilion which refers to the alchemist’s crucible. And it was also in Venice that the purple pigments were presented to the public. Figuring prominently toward the end of his life, they acquired cosmic dimensions in the large-format canvases of his impressive *Axial Age cycle* (2005–2007).

When I spoke to Sigmar Polke in 1984 about his trip around the world and how it affected his work, he told me, “I started thinking about paint and how it is handled, I also thought about how, for example, Hinduism explains and uses colour or how Australians use colour. How they make pigments, and what a pigment is. The whole business of red and yellow and green out of a tube, which is perfectly valid, but I started thinking about what it is. [...] I began working with pigments, but instead of earthy colours, I came up with purple. An entirely abstract affair that you only get in

this part of the world; I find that surprising. And reduction to a single colour. To monochromes.”² In using the word “abstract,” Polke alludes to the fact that the purple pigments are synthetically produced. Having created this suite of works, his interest in pigments, their properties and history, extended to precious mineral pigments of historical impact, for instance, lapis lazuli and malachite, but also poisonous substances like realgar and emerald green.”

Thomas Elsaesser, *Sigmar Polke: Film as Double Exposure*

“Throughout his life Polke explored the possibilities of how to “automate” painting, perhaps not quite as resolutely as Warhol, but nonetheless, the cinema’s automatism may well have been an inspiration, encouraging him to experiment with seriality, also in his paintings. Automatism was part of the legacy of Dada and Surrealism, treating chance and uncertainty as creative forces and structuring principles, to which Polke exposed himself by often carrying a 16mm Bolex camera with him wherever he went. In this sense, Polke’s film camera was more like a tool among other tools, rather than a privileged medium for capturing or recording reality. It justifies Engelbach calling Polke a “bricoleur,” in the sense that he used different materials and varied techniques, often borrowed from industrial processes and commercial art, in order to produce not only works with an autonomous, authored status, but materially fixing processes and aggregate states, the result of tests and experiments.”

Erik Verhagen, *Sigmar Polke: From Rival to Model. A German Perspective*

“The Polke/Richter connection was the most abiding within the group, lasting until the late 1960s—a little under a decade. Won over by the sense of humour³ of an artist nine years his junior and impressed by his ability to turn out technically meticulous work despite family constraints, precarious financial circumstances and a tiny apartment, Richter shared Polke’s rejection of the art world: “We thought everything was so stupid and we refused to participate. That was the basis of our understanding.”⁴ The “self-curated” exhibition put on by the four artists in an improvised gallery in Düsseldorf in May 1963 was the first milestone in the history of the Polke/Richter duo: it introduced the concept of “Imperialist Realism”, an echoing of the “Capitalist Realism”⁵ that would serve as slogan and partial title for a second event⁶ organised by Lueg and Richter in October of the same year. Polke dissociated himself from the new venture in what Robert Storr sees as a sign of the “internal competitiveness”⁷ marking relations between the four artists.⁸

While American Pop was an obvious source of inspiration, the two artists were clearly striving to avoid identification with it. Their goal was a cynicism–inflected German variant tinged with veiled references to the Socialist Realism which Richter, given the age gap and his relatively late opting for exile, had been markedly more exposed to. This shared East German background also underlay their undisguised aversion to any corporatist–flavoured aesthetic: neither would ever become locked into an authoritarian rhetoric, tendency or attitude; for them doctrine and dogma were synonymous with obstacles to individual liberty. Both were *Einzelgänger*, loners who certainly took advantage of the group dynamic of the Düsseldorf School, but on their own individual terms.”

- 1 William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act V, scene 5, 19–28.
- 2 “Poison is Effective; Painting is Not. Bice Curiger in conversation with Sigmar Polke”, (1984), in *Parkett*, no. 26, Zurich, December 1990, pp.18–26.
- 3 Regarding Polke’s humour, see Gregory Williams, *Permission to Laugh: Humor and Politics in Contemporary German Art*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2012.
- 4 Gerhard Richter quoted by Robert Storr in *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, op. cit., p. 30.
- 5 The concept of “Capitalist Realism” was introduced by Richter in late April 1963 in a press release for the May exhibition. The term, however, does not appear on the exhibition’s “invitation/manifesto.” See *the Letter to the “Neue Deutsche Wochenschau”*, in Gerhard Richter. *Textes 1962–1993*, Les presses du réel, Dijon 2012, p. 11.
- 6 *Leben mit Pop. Eine Demonstration für den Kapitalistischen Realismus*, Düsseldorf, October 1963. For more details see Dietmar Elger, *Gerhard Richter, Maler, Dumont, Cologne 2002*.
- 7 Robert Storr in *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, op. cit., p. 32. Richter has a vague memory of Polke pulling out because of an argument between the artists. See the interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist in Gerhard Richter. *Textes 1962–1993*, op. cit., p. 227.
- 8 The four would exhibit together one last time, but in the company of other artists, in *Néodada, Pop, Décollage, Kapitalistischer Realismus* at the René Block gallery in Berlin in 1964. Work by Richter, Lueg and Polke was also presented at the Parnass gallery in Wuppertal in 1964, and then at the Orez gallery in The Hague in 1965 under the title *Kapitalistisch Realisme*. Richter, Lueg & Polke.

3 SIGMAR POLKE'S FILMS AT THE TEATRINO DI PALAZZO GRASSI

A rare opportunity to discover the films of Sigmar Polke. His work as a filmmaker is little known but more than 100 hours of films are kept by the Estate of Sigmar Polke.

Shot in 16 mm in colours or black and white, the films are a visual diary of the artist's private life, travels, views on politics as well as his creative process – in particular his experimentation on colours.

Ironic, witty, curious, their aesthetic and post-production confirm Polke's sense of humour and thirst for experimentation. The artist plays with the film's sensitivity to light and uses various means to suggest a close contact with the environment – blurred image, long-cut, wide range of camera movements, addition of unplanned elements.

A selection of nine films shot in Italy between 1985 and 1991 will be screened from 14 to 17 April 2016 and again in September at the Teatrino di Palazzo Grassi.

Sigmar Polke is a tireless traveler and Italy one of his favorite destination since the 1970s. With his camera, Polke portrays famous and little-known locations, captures moments of his private life, details that attract his attention. Place and time blend in a kaleidoscope of images and visual associations. In Italy Polke follows the road of Antiquity, studies the Masters, their techniques, the long-forgotten materials they used. Polke looks at the past to better depict the present.

The programme

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1.
Palazzo Regale (Pompeji et al.)
16mm film, digitized
1986/2016
colour, silent
c.8:46 min | 4.
Landscapes (San Vitale et al.)
16mm film, digitized
1986/2016
colour, silent
c.8:59 min | 7.
Assisi (Venice Biennale et al.)
16mm film, digitized
1985-86/2016
colour, silent
c.8:57 min |
| 2.
La Verna
16mm film, digitized
1986/2016
colour, silent
c.9:03 min | 5.
Venice (Regata Storica et al.)
16mm film, digitized
c.1985-86/2016
colour, silent
c.9:03 min | 8.
Venice Biennale (Quartz et al.)
16mm film, digitized
1986
colour, silent
c.9:05 min |
| 3.
Verona (Mantegna et al.)
16mm film, digitized
c.1984-1986/2016
colour, silent
c.8:51 min | 6.
Venice (Violonist et al.)
16mm film, digitized
1986/2016
colour, silent
c.8:53 min | 9.
Sfumato (Solfatera et al.)
16mm film, digitized
1991/2016
colour, silent
c.12:02 min |

4 LIST OF WORKS

Engel, 1962

Oil on canvas
40 x 50 cm
Private collection

Schrank, 1963

Enamel paint on linen
49,5 x 57,5 cm
Private collection

Junge mit Zahnbürste, 1964

Dispersion, gouache on canvas
110 x 130 cm
Kunsthhaus NRW, Kornelimünster

Das Palmen-Bild, 1964

Dispersion on patterned fabric
91,5 x 75,4 cm
Private collection

Vase II, 1965

Dispersion on beaver cloth
90 x 75 cm
Stiftung Museum Kunstpalast,
Düsseldorf

Bohnen, 1965

Casein paint on patterned fabric
49,6 x 39,1 cm
Private collection

Liebespaar I, 1965

Pastel on fabric
190 x 165 cm
Private Collection

Affe mit Spiegelei, 1966 ca.

Oil on canvas
40 x 50 cm
Private collection

Triptychon mit gelben Streifen, 1966

Dispersion on canvas
3 panels each 90 x 75 cm
Private collection

Lampionblumen, 1966

Dispersion on patterned fabric
50 x 60 cm
Private collection

Strand, 1966

Dispersion on canvas
80 x 150 cm
Museum für Gegenwartskunst,
Siegen

Interieur, 1966

Dispersion on canvas
160 x 140 cm
Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden

Wiederbelebungsversuch an Bambusstangen,
1967

Plastic bowl, bamboo poles, water
variable dimensions
Private collection

Kartoffelhaus, 1967/1990

Wood, nails, potatoes
252 x 200 x 200 cm
Pinault Collection

Sternhimmeltuch, 1968

Cords, cardboard disks, cardboard letters,
silk ribbons and crayon on cotton
252 x 243 cm
Private collection

Reh, 1968

Dispersion on woolen blanket
90 x 75 cm
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Museum Brandhorst, Munich

Reiherbild I, 1968

Dispersion on beaver cloth
190 x 150 cm
Kunstmuseum, Bonn

Dublin, 1968

Dispersion on canvas
160 x 125,5 cm
Nationalegalerie Hamburger Bahnhof –
Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin

Telepathische Sitzung II

(*William Blake - Sigmar Polke*), 1968
Acrylic, enamel, cords on fabric
2 parts, 50 x 43 cm each
Viehof Collection, formerly Speck Collection

Kathreiners Morgenlatte, 1969-1979

Acrylic, gouache, wood, collage
on canvas and fabric
230 x 310 cm
Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao

Alice im Wunderland, 1972

Acrylic, spray paint, poster paint
and metallic paint on patterned fabric
310,5 x 286 cm
Private collection

Ohne Titel, 1972-1976

Acrylic, gouache and metallic paint on paper
198,1 x 274,3 cm
Pinault Collection

Indianer mit Adler, 1975

Acrylic, spray enamel and glitter glue on Lurex
179 x 150 cm
Pinault Collection

Ohne Titel (Farbprobe), 1978

Enamel, acrylic, glitter, spray paint on canvas
50 x 40 cm
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
Museum Brandhorst, Munich

Ohne Titel (Sicherheitsverwahrung), 1979

Acrylic, spray paint, safety pins
and various objects on table cloth
130 x 110 cm
Musée d'Art, Toulon

Cameleonardo da Willich, 1979

Acrylic, spray paint, brass on damasked cotton
110 x 205 cm
Centre Georges Pompidou,
MNAM / CCI, Paris

Die Schere, 1982

Acrylic and iron mica on patterned fabric
290 x 290 cm
Private collection

Skizzenbuch 1, 1982

ink on paper, 12 unbound sheets
20,6 x 14,4 cm each
Musée de Grenoble

Koloss, 1982

Red lead ground, artificial resin,
lacquer and pigment on canvas
150 x 180 cm
Private collection

Gespenst, 1982

Artificial resin, acrylic, pigment on canvas
150 x 180 cm
Private collection

Komet, 1982

Red lead ground, artificial resin
and pigment on canvas
150 x 180 cm
Private collection

Negativwert I-III, 1982

mixed media
260 x 200 cm each
Private collection

Ohne Titel (Farbprobe), 1982-1993

Mixed media on canvas
Private collection

Gugu und Georg, 1983

Acrylic, artificial resin on fabric
220 x 460 cm
Pinault Collection

Conjunctio, 1983

Acrylic, iron mica, lacquer, resin
on patterned fabric
291 x 291 cm
Private collection

Die Perücke, 1983

Acrylic on patterned fabric
290 x 290 cm
Private collection

Skizzenbuch 3, 1984

ink on paper, 12 unbound sheets
20,6 x 14,4 cm each
Musée de Grenoble

Leonardo, 1984

Lacquer on canvas
260 x 200 cm
Private collection

Amerikanisch-Mexikanische Grenze, 1984

Day-glo paint, acrylic on cotton
223 x 300 cm
Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden

Hochstand, 1984

Silver nitrate and damar resin on canvas
300 x 225 cm
Private collection

Polzeischwein, 1986

Acrylic on canvas
302 x 225 cm
Private collection

Purpur, 1986

Tyrian purple on silk
324 x 90 cm
Private collection

Schleifenbild (Schnörkelgesicht), 1986
Graphite, damar, silver oxide on canvas
200 x 190 cm
Private collection

Indigo, 1986
Pigment, chlorine on cotton
2 panels, 300 x 225 cm each
Private collection

Hände (vorm Gesicht), 1986
Acrylic on canvas
226 x 305 cm
Städtisches Museum Abteiberg,
Mönchengladbach

Ohne Titel (Purpurschnecke), 1986/1990
48 photographs
43,8 x 51,8 cm each
Private collection

Pavillon Biennale Venedig, 1986
Gelatin silver prints, framed
161 x 157 x 5 cm
Private collection

Jeux d'enfants, 1988
Acrylic, artificial resin, dyes on fabric
225 x 300 cm
Centre Georges Pompidou,
MNAM / CCI, Paris

*Message de Marie-Antoinette
à la Conciergerie*, 1989
Artificial resin on printed polyester
130 x 150 cm
Private collection

Nostradamus, 1989
Artificial resin, pigment, silver leaves,
iron mica on fabric
150 x 180 cm
Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid

*Laterna Magica: Die Geschichte
vom Hund*, 1988-1992
Artificial resin on polyester fabric,
painted recto and verso
6 elements 130 x 150 cm each
Private collection

Ohne Titel, 1990
Acrylic, ink on paper
242,6 x 254,6 cm
Pinaul Collection

Der Gärtner, 1992
Acrylic on fabric
290 x 290 cm
Private collection

Tropenwald, 1992
Wood veneer, artificial resin on polyester
300 x 225 cm
Private collection

Flüchtende, 1992
Acrylic and artificial resin on fabric
225 x 300 cm
Carré d'Art – Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes

*Magische Quadrate I-VII (Saturn, Jupiter,
Mars, Sonne, Venus, Merkur, Mond)*, 1992
Acrylic, interference colour on canvas
7 panels
I: 190 x 200 cm; II: 200 x 190 cm;
III: 190 x 200 cm; IV: 190 x 200 cm;
V: 200 x 190 cm; VI: 190 x 200 cm;
VII: 200 x 190 cm
Private collection

Schiesskebab, 1994
Artificial resin, acrylic, dry pigment on polyester
230 x 300 cm
Private Collection

Lapis Lazuli II, 1994
Lapis lazuli and resin on canvas
300 x 224,5 cm
Carré d'Art – Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes

Hermes Trismegistos I - IV, 1995
Artificial resin and lacquer on polyester fabric
4 panels
I: 202 x 192 cm; II-III-IV: 302,3 x 402,6 cm
De Pont Museum, Tilburg

Ohne Titel (Ruhe auf der Flucht nach Ägypten), 1997
Artificial resin, acrylic on polyester
220 x 300 cm
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid

*Für den Dritten Stand bleiben nur
noch die Krümel*, 1997
Acrylic, artificial resin on polyester fabric
280 x 350 cm
Pinaul Collection

Man füttert die Hühner, 2005
Acrylic on canvas
250 x 250 cm
Musée de Grenoble

Die Trennung des Mondes von den einzelnen Planeten, 2005
Acrylic and artificial resin on fabric
300 x 500 cm
Pinault Collection

Zirkusfiguren, 2005
Acrylic, artificial resin and clay on fabric
300 x 500 cm
Pinault Collection

Ohne Titel / Axial Age, 2005
Artificial resin, dry pigment, spray paint, acrylic on fabric
300 x 480 cm
Pinault Collection

Jugendstil, 2005
Artificial resin, dry pigment, spray paint, acrylic and clay on fabric
300 x 480 cm
Pinault Collection

Neobyzanz / Neo-Byzantium, 2005
Artificial resin, dry pigment on fabric
300 x 480 cm
Pinault Collection

Strahlen Sehen, 2007
mixed media
5 panels
I-II-III-IV: 140 x 120 cm; V: 120 x 140 cm
Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Siegen

Forward, 2007
Artificial resin, dry pigment, spray paint, acrylic and clay on fabric
300 x 500 cm
Pinault Collection

Determination of the Position: Here It Is, 2007
Artificial resin, dry pigment, spray paint, acrylic on fabric
300 x 500 cm
Pinault Collection

Deucalion's Flood, 2007
Artificial resin, dry pigment on fabric
3 panels, 480 x 900 cm (overall)
Pinault Collection

Urlicht, 2007
Artificial resin, dry pigment on fabric
300 x 500 cm
Pinault Collection

Films

Ohne Titel (Venedig, leerer pavilion),
Undated (1983-86)
16mm film, digitized, colour, silent
28:29min
Private collection

Biennale Venedig,
Undated (1983-86)
16mm film, digitized, colour, silent
45:08min
Private collection

Venedig (Stemmler stemmt),
Undated (1986)
16mm film, digitized, colour, silent
42:08min
Private collection

5 CHRONOLOGY OF SIGMAR POLKE

1941

Born in Oels, Silesia (Germany, now Oleśnica, Poland)

1945

Family flees to Thuringia in East Germany.

1953

They stop in West Berlin and then settle in Düsseldorf.

1959-1960

Apprenticeship in the stained glass factory at Düsseldorf-Kaiserswerth.

1961-1967

Studies at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under Gerhard Hoehme and Karl Otto Goetz.

1963

Founder of the Capitalist Realism movement, together with Gerhard Richter and Konrad Fischer-Lueg.

First group exhibition, *Kuttner, Lueg, Polke, Richter*, in Düsseldorf, Kaiserstrasse 31a.

1966

First solo exhibition at Galerie René Block in Berlin and then at Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf.

Exhibition *Polke/Richter*, Galerie h in Hanover.

1970-1971

Guest professor at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Hamburg.

1972

Moves to Gaspelshof in Willich/North Rhine-Westphalia.

Participates in Documenta V, Kassel, with paintings and the film "Der ganze Körper fühlt sich leicht und möchte fliegen", produced with Christof Kohlhöfer.

1974

Travels to Pakistan and Afghanistan, a source of many photographic works.

1975

Awarded the 13th São Paulo Biennial prize for painting.

1976

First retrospective in a museum, *Sigmar Polke, Bilder Tücher Objekte*, at Kunsthalle Tübingen, which travels to Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.

1977

Participates in Documenta VI, Kassel.

1977-1991

Professor at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Hamburg.

1978

Moves to Cologne.

1980

Participates to the 39th Biennale di Venezia. Travels to Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

1981-1982

Polke's paintings are featured in all of the major exhibitions touting the revival of painting (*Zeitgeist*, Berlin ; *documenta VII*, Kassel ; *Avanguardia / Transavanguardia*, Roma ; *Westkunst*, Cologne ; *A New Spirit in Painting*, London).

1982

Receives the Will Grohmann Award of the Academy of Arts, Berlin.

1983-1984

Exhibition at Museum Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam which travels to Städtisches Kunstmuseum, Bonn.

1984

Awarded the Kurt Schwitters Prize of the City of Hanover. First big solo show in Switzerland, Kunsthaus Zurich (curator: Harald Szeemann); travels to Kunsthalle Köln.

1986

Awarded the Golden Lion for painting at the 42th Biennale di Venezia.

1987

Awarded the Lichtwark Prize of the City of Hamburg.

1988

Receives International Art Prize from the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg.

First retrospective in France at ARC, Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris.

1990

Retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, which travels to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

First retrospective of photographic works, *Sigmar Polke – Fotografien*, at Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden.

1991

Exhibition at Museo di Capodimonte, Naples.

1992

Exhibition at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

1993

Awarded the Lovis Corinth Prize, Regensburg.
Participates in the 45th Biennale di Venezia.

1994

Awarded the Praemium Erasmianum, Amsterdam.
Second exhibition in a French museum,
at Carré d'Art-Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes.

1994-1995

Exhibition of paintings, IVAM, Centre del Carme, Valencia.

1995

Awarded the Carnegie International Prize,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
Photoworks: When Pictures Vanish, a retrospective
of photographic works at Museum of Contemporary
Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, which travels to Site, Santa Fe,
and to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

1996

Awarded the Nord/LB Art Prize of the
Norddeutsche Landesbank.

1997

Retrospective *Sigmar Polke. Die drei Lügen der Malerei*
at Kunst und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik
Deutschland, Bonn, which travels to Nationalgalerie
im Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin.

1998

Awarded the 14th Annual Infinity Award of the
International Center of Photography, New York.

1999

Works on paper 1963-1974, survey exhibition at the
Museum of Modern Art, New York and Kunsthalle,
Hamburg. Participates to the 48th Biennale di Venezia.

2000

Awarded the Kaiserring Prize by the City of Goslar.

2000-2001

Sigmar Polke. Die gesamten Editionen
1963-2002, retrospective of the complete editions at
Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, which travels
to Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik
Deutschland, Bonn and Kunsthau, Zürich.

2001

Sigmar Polke et la Révolution française, at Musée de la
Révolution française, Vizille.
Sigmar Polke. Alchemist, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo
and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art de Humlebæk.
Awarded the Rhenus Prize, Mönchengladbach.

2002

Awarded the Praemium Imperiale by the Japan Art
Association, Tokyo.

2003-2004

History of Everything, Dallas Museum of Art
and the Tate Modern, London.

2005

Sigmar Polke, Works and Days, Kunsthau, Zurich.
Alice in Wonderland, Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo,
and National Museum of Art, Osaka.

2007

Awarded the Rubens Prize of the City of Siegen.
Die Linsenbilder, Museum für Gegenwartskunst,
Siegen and Chicago Arts Club.
Participates to the 52th Biennale di Venezia.

2009

Inauguration of the stained glass windows
in Grossmuenster Cathedral, Zurich.
Wir Kleinbürger, Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

2009-2011

Selection of works presented in the exhibition
"Mapping The Studio" at Punta della Dogana.

2010

Awarded the Roswitha Haftmann Prize, Zurich.
Dies on June 10th in Cologne.

2011

Selection of works presented at the
54th Biennale di Venezia.

2011-2012

The work *Kartoffelhaus* (1967/1990) is presented in the
exhibition "The World Belongs to You" at Palazzo Grassi.

2011-2013

Selection of works presented in the exhibition
"In Praise of Doubt" at Punta della Dogana.

2013-2014

Exhibition at the Musée de Grenoble.

2014

Selection of works presented in the exhibition "Le Festin
de l'art" at the Palais des arts et du festival in Dinard.

2014-2015

Retrospective exhibition *Alibis: Sigmar Polke 1963-2010*
presented at the Museum of Modern Art in New York,
then at the Tate Modern in London and finally at the
Ludwig Museum in Cologne.

2015

The work *Kartoffelhaus* (1967/1990) is presented
in the exhibition "Prima Materia" at Punta della Dogana.

6 EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

264 pages

1 edition in 3 languages (Italian, English, French)

50 €

published by Marsilio Editori

graphic design by Leonardo Sonnoli, Tassinari/Vetta

The exhibition catalogue brings together texts by

“The Cosmic Crucible and Purple. Sigmar Polke in Venice”

Bice Curiger

Art critic and historian, curator of the 2011 Venice Biennale

“Sigmar Polke: Film as Double Exposure”

Thomas Elsaesser

Film historian

“Polke. Passages to Italy”

Elena Geuna, curator of the Sigmar Polke exhibition at Palazzo Grassi

Independent curator and contemporary art advisor

“Three lies and a few unanswered questions”

Guy Tosatto, curator of the Sigmar Polke exhibition at Palazzo Grassi

Director of Musée de Grenoble

“Sigmar Polke: From Rival to Model. A German Perspective”

Erik Verhagen

Art critic and journalist

7 BIOGRAPHY OF THE CURATORS

Elena Geuna

Born in 1960, Elena Geuna first studied in Geneva and then in New York for her Master's degree. She has been an independent curator and contemporary art advisor since 2000. Her main curatorial museum projects include exhibitions "Jeff Koons" (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, 2003; Château de Versailles, 2008); "Fontana: Luce e Colore" (Palazzo Ducale, Genoa, 2008); "Arte Povera in Moscow" (Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow, 2011). In 2012, she curated the exhibitions "Quilling" and "Freedom not Genius. Works from Damien Hirst's Murderme collection" (then presented at the Multimedia Art Museum in Moscow) at Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli in Turin. In 2013, she worked in collaboration with Rudolf Stingel to conceive an exhibition project of the artist's works specially imagined for the spaces of Palazzo Grassi in Venice.

Guy Tosatto

Born in 1958, Guy Tosatto graduated in art history in 1983. He has been Conservateur du Patrimoine (curator of artistic heritage) since 1984 and was Director of different French museums, including of the contemporary art museum in Rochechouart, the Carré d'Art in Nîmes and of the musée des Beaux-Arts in Nantes. He has been Director of the musée de Grenoble since September 2002. Within these institutions he has organised and curated many modern and contemporary art exhibitions, some of which in collaboration with artists such as Wolfgang Laib, Sigmar Polke, Thomas Schütte, Gerhard Richter, David Tremlett, Philippe Cognée and Juan Muñoz.