

Leo Koenig Inc., in collaboration with Winckler Fine Arts, Berlin, is pleased to announce the opening of "Sigmar Polke: Photoworks 1964-2000". Widely acknowledged as one of the most important creative forces to emerge from post World War II Europe, Sigmar Polke was an artist of incredible unpredictability. From the very beginning, and throughout his career, Polke resisted the idea of an identifying "signature." In his practice, the artist incorporated techniques borrowed from mass marketing and commercial realms into a proscenium of images that overlap and resonate over time. Inscrutable, mysterious, iconoclast, are all words that at one time or another have been used to describe both the artist and his work. As difficult as it may be to extrapolate precise meaning from Polke's prodigious and varied output, one would never describe his work as incoherent. An underpinning of acerbic wit, indelible beauty, and a poetic sensibility temper his images and communicate an accidental seduction.

Over the course of his life, Polke made thousands of photographs and the selection of works for this exhibition keenly highlights the integral role that photography had played in the artist's larger oeuvre. Ranging in tenor from charmingly clumsy to poignant and wistful, the works have been amassed from a variety of sources and collections, both public and private. Many of these have rarely been seen in the United States. Highlights of the exhibition include works that were previously exhibited at Documenta 6 in 1977, and the Kunsthalle Mannheim in 2004. One series of 20 photographs are unique variants from the same series shown in "When Pictures Vanish" at MOCA, Los Angeles in 1995. Also included is an eerie selection of photographs taken at the Capuchin Catacombs of Palermo, and a series of photograms in which Polke experimented with, among other untried techniques, the effects of radioactive materials on the photographic process.

Sigmar Polke was constantly experimenting with the medium and his photographs range from humorously staged ordinary objects to intrepid shots of people that he took while traveling through places such as the Bowery in New York City, the streets of Paris, and small villages in Afghanistan. While the images contain the evidence of his subjects, the developing process provided Polke the ability to create hallucinatory narratives, resembling an episode from a dream. Above all, the photographs reveal an overarching attitude towards imagery that obscures or shifts a central focus, emphasizes a delight in the unintentional, and infuses his pictorial language with an incandescent force.

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