

PRODUCTIVE

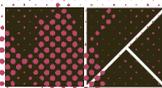
**IMAGE
INTERFERENCE**

KERSTIN BRÄTSCH · PHOEBE COLLINGS-JAMES
RAPHAEL HEFTI · CAMILLE HENROT · TREVOR PAGLEN
SIGMAR POLKE · SETH PRICE · MAX SCHULZE

SIGMAR **POLKE** AND **ARTISTIC** PERSPECTIVES
TODAY

An anniversary project of

ANNA
POLKE
STIFTUNG

 **KUNSTHALLE
DÜSSELDORF**

**13/11/2021 –
06/02/2022**

Imprint

This accompanying booklet is published as part of the anniversary project for Sigmar Polke's 80th birthday, on the occasion of the exhibition

Productive Image Interference: Sigmar Polke and Artistic Perspectives Today

Kunsthalle Düsseldorf
November 13, 2021 – February 6, 2022

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Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday, public holidays
11 am – 6 pm

The Stadtwerke Düsseldorf offer the opportunity to visit Kunsthalle and Kunstverein free of charge between 6 and 8 pm on the last Thursday of every month.

Entrance

Adults: EUR 6
Concessions: EUR 3
Groups (10 or more): EUR 3
Disabled persons: free
Young persons under age 18: free

Directions

Using Public Transport:
Stop: Heinrich-Heine-Allee
Underground: U70, U71, U72, U73, U74,
U75, U76, U77, U78, U79, U80, U83

An anniversary project of

**ANNA
POLKE
STIFTUNG**

The exhibition is funded by

Ministerium für
Kultur und Wissenschaft
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen



Kunststiftung
NRW

**ART FOUNDATION
MENTOR LUCERNE**

The Kunsthalle Düsseldorf is funded by



Landeshauptstadt
Düsseldorf

Permanent partner of the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf

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Düsseldorf**

PREFACE

In an age of fake news based on image manipulation, virtual reality, and an infinite visual cosmos of increasingly ubiquitous JPEGs and GIFs, it has become clear to us that we cannot trust our eyes. The images that surround us do not depict reality as much as play a decisive role in forging it – including transmission errors, loss of quality, hacks, and other glitches.

When Sigmar Polke was a student at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the early 1960s, his interest turned to images from the contemporary mass media of television and newspapers. Influenced by American Pop Art, he turned them into artistic motifs. The transmission, interference, transforming, and recoding of images, including their resulting or revealed flaws, became the trademark of his *Rasterbilder* (raster pictures). Even later on, it remained a central instrument and motif in Polke's work, in which anything and everything could become a material for art, from printing errors in newspapers to ornamental elements by Albrecht Dürer and Polke's own drawings. Polke died in 2010, and we can only imagine what influence the latest tools and applications as well as the accompanying omnipresence of images would have had on his work.

In view of current technological developments, it is not surprising that artists today also make productive use of an ever-growing flood of images to create something new.

The selected works by Kerstin Brätsch, Phoebe Collings-James, Raphael Hefti, Camille Henrot, Trevor Paglen, Seth Price, Max Schulze, and Avery Singer address the complex interplay of transformed and constantly transforming images and their relationship to the world, to what now exists in the wake of and concurrently with Polke, and what we may still encounter.

Their aim is often to understand and use knowledge conveyed through images, to dismantle and reassemble it. In this productive image interference, which goes hand in hand with exploring and breaking down genre-specific boundaries, a common attitude toward images can be discerned.

The exhibition was initiated by the Anna Polke Foundation on the occasion of Sigmar Polke's 80th birthday and realized with the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf. It is curated by Kathrin Barutzki and Nelly Gawellek (both from the Anna Polke Foundation) along with Gregor Jansen (Kunsthalle Düsseldorf).

OTHER

DESASTRES AND SHEER MIRACLES

SIGMAR POLKE
RAPHAEL HEFTI AVERY SINGER

This room reveals the artistic processes in which the artists experiment more or less deliberately with the limits and possibilities of techniques and media. Chance and control, like chaos and disruption, are part of the process of creating images. The works are presented as active, open media that play with the viewer's perception.

SIGMAR POLKE

In *Desastres und andere bare Wunder II* (1982/84), Polke tested the limits of the medium of photography: he made enlarged prints of an old negative that he had developed two years earlier using dish soap, raspberry schnapps, and coffee. He also interfered in this process with chemicals and other tricks. In this way, Polke created painterly photographs that show the aesthetic potential of the supposedly flawed.

In the series *Der Teufel von Berlin* (1997) as well, Polke intentionally used a photocopier the “wrong” way. By moving the original image across the glass, he created endless variations on it. For the work *Gebetbuch Maximilian* (1986), by contrast, Polke used two techniques: For the ground he combined resin and graphite dust, which reacted with one another. The “uncontrolled” process in the creation of the ground contrasts with the controlled, precise painting of the decorative motif with a brush and acrylic paint.

Eisberg (2001), *Strahlen Sehen* (2006/07), and *Primavera* (2003) exemplify Polke's interest in perception, deception, illusionism, and our visual habits. Furthermore, in these works he tested out and crossed the boundaries of the category of painting with a variety of grounds, formats, and methods of applying paint.

RAPHAEL HEFTI

As he creates his works, Raphael Hefti focuses on the materials and procedures in the work process. In his series *Lycopodium* (since 2012), the material from which the work takes its title, also known as ground pines or creeping cedars, plays a role in the creation of the work by leaving miraculous traces on the light-sensitive medium. This process has the special quality of making invisible, hidden forces visible in the form of enormous photograms. The results are reminiscent of photographs from space. Hefti works along the boundaries of art. Even when he works within conventional genres, he draws from sources from outside the realm of art. For example, he uses industrial materials, acquires scientific knowledge, and experiments with high-tech processes. By using them in ways that differ from their actual purpose, he puts the artistic process to the test. The chemical reactions or production processes for which he collaborates with specialized companies are beyond the artist's complete control. The risk of failure is factored in, and mistakes are welcome.

AVERY SINGER

At first glance, the artist Avery Singer's working method seems to differ from Polke's and Hefti's. Her paintings are first planned in detail on the computer and then made with spray paint and stencils. She explores the potential of painting techniques in the digital age. For her works she uses motifs from everyday life, memes from the Internet, and art-historical predecessors and applies them layer by layer to the canvas by machine and by hand. She explains her style of painting and use of mechanical techniques: "I think paintbrushes would make me think too much." At first glance, the smooth, flawless-looking surface of the works is reminiscent of flat digital screens. This inevitably triggers the viewer's desire to explore the pictorial space. Challenging both the process of creation and perception, Singer also pushes the medium of painting to its limits.

YOU CAN SEE WHAT IT IS

SIGMAR POLKE

CAMILLE HENROT **TREVOR PAGLEN** **MAX SCHULZE** **SETH PRICE**

The works in this room deal with the power and truth content of images. They also emphasize the political potential of visual interference. The artists focus on connecting different contexts. They highlight topics such as surveillance, control, and the hierarchization of images.

SIGMAR POLKE

Sigmar Polke's *Rasterbilder* (raster pictures) remain highly relevant today: *Menschenmenge* (1969), for example, suggests surveillance techniques and dragnet investigations. The artist made use of the various background stories and specific qualities of images for his works. By applying the individual dots of a half-tone newspaper print to the canvas and greatly enlarging them in his raster pictures, he caused the subject to dissolve in places as it was translated into painting. For example, Polke's early raster picture *Pasadena* (1968) supposedly shows the surface of the moon at the landing site of the Surveyor 1 space probe. However, the subject dissolves into abstract shapes that could depict all sorts of things. This contrasts with the caption integrated into the picture, which indicates what it is meant to show: a rock and reflections of the sun on the surface of the moon. Nonetheless it remains questionable what we actually see here – in any case, the work does not reveal it to us.

CAMILLE HENROT

Inspired by Polke's interest in optical illusions and playing with the viewer's perception, Camille Henrot developed the series *Dos and Don'ts – Smoke without Fire* (2021) for the exhibition. Various levels overlap in these works: they include brushstrokes that were created by hand as well as others that were generated by a computer. With her works, the artist points out that every picture is something that is "made" and at the same time emerges from different contexts. The images that she uses as templates for her works are personal smartphone snapshots, her own watercolors reminiscent of ultrasound images, cartoons, found items from the Internet, and excerpts from a 19th-century book on etiquette for women. Her works deal with outdated traditions and social conventions as well as the associated rules and surveillance mechanisms, which she reveals and simultaneously questions.

TREVOR PAGLEN

Trevor Paglen's photographs of sky scenes are reminiscent of canonical paintings from art history. Only on closer examination do tiny, supposed mistakes in the pictures become apparent. These mistakes turn out to be drones and disrupt the romantic notions that the pictures might suggest.

With the video work *Drone Vision* (2010), the artist confronts us with political and military systems and their surveillance techniques. To this end, Paglen used images from a communications satellite that were intercepted by a hacker. These images generated by machines for use in drone strikes by other machines create a discrepancy: people and places become indistinct or completely abstract.

MAX SCHULZE

At first glance, Max Schulze's works seem like abstract compositions. However, they are military camouflage patterns that were painted on canvas with wall paint. Camouflage has undergone an astonishing shift in meaning due to the fashion industry and pop culture, and today, contrary to its original function, it is no longer used only to remain invisible, but also to attract attention. Schulze's in some cases brightly colored camouflage paintings are also not inconspicuous – on the contrary, some of their garish color combinations are quite off-putting – and thus ironically contrast with the “desire to disappear” referenced in their title, *Der Wunsch zu verschwinden (Camopedia)* (2019).

SETH PRICE

With a still image from an execution video that was posted online, Seth Price marks a decisive moment in the discussion of images and their circulation: In this case, the online video platform YouTube suddenly became a medium for Islamist terror. By enlarging the image and applying it to a transparent film, in *Hostage Video Still, Unused Pieces, Coral* (2006) Price deals with the contradictory transparency of Web 2.0. We are in a time when boundaries are becoming blurred and the gaps between reality and fiction in the media are becoming visible. These crossings of boundaries and collisions of context come to light in Price's work.

HISTORY OF EVERYTHING

**SIGMAR POLKE
RAPHAEL HEFTI KERSTIN BRÄTSCH
PHOEBE COLLINGS-JAMES**

Materials and motifs suggest different narratives, depending on their artistic use. This room brings together various perspectives and contexts that deal with authorship, the myth of the artistic genius, and the originality of artworks. The supposedly fixed categorization of art is questioned, and the art-historical canon is expanded to include new readings.

SIGMAR POLKE

Sigmar Polke often used existing images from different contexts in his works and developed new pictures out of them. In *Kunstwerk der Woche* (2002), for example, Polke references the motif of a javelin thrower, which has been widely used since antiquity. In his work *Untitled (Besteckkästchen/Dr Pabscht het z'Schpiez s'Schpäckbschteck z'schpät bschteut)* (ca. 1975), Polke takes up an illustration from Max Ernst's 1934 novel *Une semaine de bonté (A Week of Kindness)*. This not only shows his multimedia, experimental use of existing images, but also contextualizes the original motifs in a way that once again raises the question of the criteria for evaluating art.

Yet not only motifs, but also materials have connotations and contain their own stories and modes of action. Polke's *Farbproben* (color experiments) are a series of works that began in the 1980s, in which the artist experimented with in some cases precious, imperial materials as well as poisonous substances. Changes in the process of creating the works open up new associations and contexts in the pictures, whose visual transformations in some cases continue to this day, as in the silver compounds and pigments that continue to change over the years.

RAPHAEL HEFTI

In his works, Raphael Hefti experiments with unusual materials, similar in some ways to Sigmar Polke in his *Farbproben* (color experiments), as well as with the artistic media and formats he uses. He is interested in industrial and post-industrial processes. For the *Poly-crystals* series (2021), Hefti used bismuth, a metal whose surface changes color when it comes into contact with moisture. He casts and etches it in various ways, creating panels that appear finely drawn or are brightly colored. The material brings its own connotations into the exhibition space – for example, by recalling shimmering oily surfaces.

KERSTIN BRÄTSCH

Kerstin Brätsch actively confronts historical predecessors and Sigmar Polke in particular. For her installation *Sigis Erben* (Sig's heirs) (2021) she uses a similar material to what Polke used for the stained glass windows of the Grossmünster in Zurich. Finding one's own place requires a deliberate engagement with one's predecessors and calls into question a supposedly subjective perspective. She thus negotiates topics such as authorship and the formation of the canon, while also questioning the distinction between art and crafts. The decision to work with glass is a logical

evolution of her artistic, multimedia practice. Brätsch's glass works were in turn used by the filmmaker Alexander Kluge as camera lenses for his two films *Der Zirkus kommt in die Stadt* and *Neun Fragmente für DAS INSTITUT* (both 2017).

PHOEBE COLLINGS-JAMES

Phoebe Collings-James problematizes the white, Western, heteronormative character of history and the present. She uses the transformative potential of art to disrupt and dismantle narrowly framed narratives. The fragile work on paper *Yellow Tissue* (2018) consists of transparent yellow lengths of paper and is attached to the wall with simple red tape. Symbolic motifs such as spiders, knots, hands, eyes, and crosses are applied to the front and back. Some of them are visible through the thin paper and appear fleeting, as if they could change form at any moment. Collings-James creates narratives in which history and (cultural) identity are understood as processes in constant motion. This is also the subject of her work *Can You Move Towards Yourself Without Flinching* (2020), which consists of a ceramic painting and a sound installation. The title itself asks a deeply philosophical question. The answer threatens to slip away from us before we can grasp it. Collings-James creates moments of disruption and uncertainty that call for reflection on the meaning of texts, systems of signs and images, as well as our own position in them.

To mark what would have been Sigmar Polke's 80th birthday and in addition to the exhibition at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, a festival lasting several days will also take place at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. It is examining *Image Interference's* origins, visual perception, and manifestations, as well as its productive potential – then and now – in the form of both theoretical and artistic contributions.

Figures active in various disciplines, including Taslima Ahmed, Bice Curiger, Raphael Hefti, Camille Henrot, Alexander Kluge, Doreen Mende, and Magnus Schäfer, will be exploring new perspectives on both Sigmar Polke's work and current art production. The youngest generation of artists will also be represented by artistic contributions. Students from Lukas Marxt's class at the academy (previously Marcel Odenbach's) will be showing work, including recent films addressing the anniversary's subject matter.

Participation in the festival is free of charge and the number of participants is limited. To register, please send an email to mail@anna-polke-stiftung.com by November 20, 2021.

Please follow the hygiene and admission rules in effect at the time of the event. The festival will take place in presence, the program will be recorded and made available online afterwards. A publication on the festival will be published in 2022.

Further information on the festival program at:



ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM AND ART EDUCATION

(in German language)

GUIDED TOURS

Art Talk / Kunst im Gespräch

Every Saturday, 2.30 – 5.30 pm

Art mediators are available for conversation.

Public guided tours

Every Sunday, 1.30 – 2.30 pm

Curator's tour

December 8, 2021, 5 – 6.30 pm

Acoustical curator's tours

for blind, visually impaired and sighted visitors

December 14, 2021, 4 – 5.30 pm

January 18, 2022, 4 – 5.30 pm

Director's tour with sign language interpreter

February 2, 2022, 5 – 6.30 pm

Special tours in German and English can be requested at +49 (0)211-89 96-243 or bildung@kunsthalle-duesseldorf.de

FAMILY PROGRAM

Family Day

On the 2nd Sunday of the month from 11 am to 6 pm, the Stadtwerke Düsseldorf invite visitors to the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf with free admission. From 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm, there will be an Open Studio for children ages 6 and up.

Special: January 9, 2022, 2.30 – 5.30 pm
Workshop with Anna Polke for children ages 6 and up.

Christmas holiday workshop

for children ages 6 and up
January 7, 2022, 12 – 3 pm

Studio K with Anna Polke

Intercultural workshop for children from 6 to 13 years in cooperation with Krass e.V.
January 21, 2022, 2.30 - 5.30 pm

INDIVIDUAL DATES

Opening

November 12, 2021, 6 – 10 pm

Tour & Talk

Intercultural themed tour with hands-on work, ages 16 and up
January 14, 2022, 3.30 – 5.30 pm

Talk: Hans-Christian Dany and Max Schulze

January 20, 2022, 7 pm

Let's Talk About... First Impressions

Guided tour for young adults, alternating between Kunsthalle and KIT – Kunst im Tunnel
January 28, 2022, 3 – 4.30 pm

Talk: Anna Polke about Sigmar Polke and the Venice Biennale 1986

January 28, 2022, 6 pm

Treffpunkt Kunsthalle 50plus

January 26, 2022, 4 and 5 pm
with the kind support of
Stadtsparkasse Düsseldorf

Finissage

February 6, 2022, 3 – 6 pm, free admission
4 pm: Talk: Kerstin Brätsch, Urs Rickenbach,
Patrizia Dander

For guided tours and workshops, registration is required at:
bildung@kunsthalle-duesseldorf.de

Please follow the hygiene and admission rules. Information on the current situation of the Corona protection regulations of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia as well as further information on the art education program can be found on our homepage.

CATALOG

A comprehensive, bilingual catalog for the exhibition has been published by DISTANZ Verlag, Berlin and is available for 30 Euros at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf on site and via the webshop.

PODCAST

Podcast episodes with further background information on the exhibition can be found at:



PADLET

For information on the exhibition and digital suggestions for children to get creative at home, visit:

