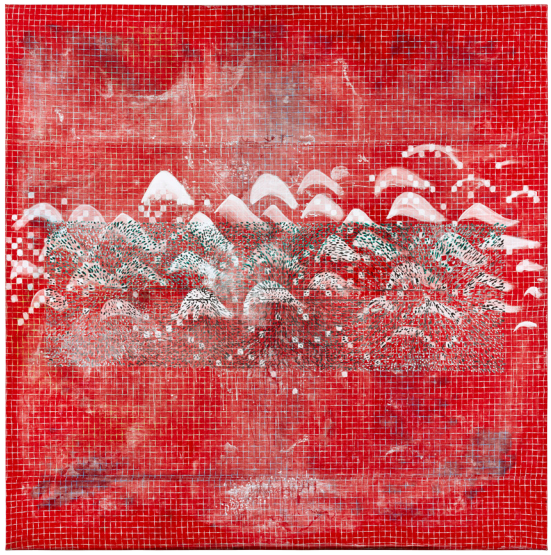
David Zwirner
537 West 20th Street
New York, NY 10011
Fax 212 517 8959
Telephone 212 517 8677

For immediate release

SIGMAR POLKE
Eine Winterreise

May 7 – June 25, 2016

Opening reception: Saturday, May 7, 6 – 8 PM
Curated by Vicente Todolí



Magnetische Landschaft (Magnetic Landscape), 1982
Acrylic and iron mica on fabric
117 11/16 x 115 ¾ inches (299 x 294 cm)
Private Collection
© The Estate of Sigmar Polke
VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/DACS, London, 2016
Photo: Lothar Schnepf

David Zwirner is pleased to announce the gallery's first exhibition dedicated to the work of Sigmar Polke since having announced its representation of the artist's estate. Curated by Vicente Todolí, the exhibition will take place at the gallery's 537 West 20th Street location and will present a selection of works by the artist that address an expanded notion of travel.

German artist Sigmar Polke (1941-2010) is widely recognized for his multidisciplinary output of paintings, photographs, drawings, prints, objects, installations, and films. Characterized by a relentlessly experimental and inquisitive attitude, the artist's work employs unusual materials and techniques, and playfully defies social, political, and aesthetic conventions. Throughout his prolific career, Polke's unorthodox approach to materials, subject matter, and artistic processes was always concerned with the testing of limits and boundaries, and this exhibition will demonstrate the breadth and lasting influence of his radical and innovative practice.

The works in the exhibition will range from playful takes on mass-produced tourist scenery from the 1960s to compositionally layered paintings from the 1980s that offer complex reinterpretations of travel-related themes, Romantic notions of the sublime, and hallucinatory imagery—thereby addressing both outward, physical travel and inner/mental, intellectual journeys. In particular, the exhibition centers on the artist's around-the-world journey from 1980 to 1981 that took him to Indonesia (Bali, Java, Sumatra), Papua New Guinea, Australia, Tasmania, Malaysia, and Thailand, among other locales. As noted by Polke, this trip inspired a close consideration of the material forms and cultural practices of color itself: "how, for example, Hinduism explains and uses color or how Australians use color."[1] The exploration of color as an aesthetic end in itself led Polke to the unconventional use of often dangerous or unstable chemical substances within his work. Describing this process, Polke stated simply: "I was looking for brilliance of color, and it happened to be toxic."[2]

The exhibition will include a number of large-scale paintings, including *Magnetische Landschaft (Magnetic Landscape)*, an abstract mountainscape executed in acrylic and iron mica on store-bought, checked fabric from 1982. The materials, content, and support in this work each simultaneously present distinct facets of Polke's multivalent investigation into German cultural and artistic history: medieval alchemical and (pseudo-)scientific experiments, Romanticism's fraught invocation of the natural world, and postwar Germany's bourgeois embrace of consumerism. The link between material experimentation and physical exploration is further explored in Polke's *Lappländische Reise (Lapland Journey)* series from 1984. As the series progresses, recognizable figures (a reindeer, a row of trees) are eliminated, as semi-transparent washes of lacquer dissolve into shifting, hallucinogenic forms.

Polke's attention to the properties and effects of transparency can be seen also in the selection of works from his series *Laterna Magica*. Painted in lacquer on both sides of transparent polyester fabric, they combine figuration and abstraction in complex, layered compositions. These works moreover evoke the medium of the magic lantern, an early slide projection device that predated the invention of the cinema.

(continued to next page)

Also on view will be a selection of experimental film works that document Polke's own travels.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue published by David Zwirner Books.

Since **Sigmar Polke's** (1941-2010) first participation in *documenta 5* in 1972, he has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at significant institutions, including Kunsthalle Tübingen, Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, and Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (1976); Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, and Kunstmuseum Bonn (1983-84); Kunsthaus Zürich and the Josef-Haubrich-Kunsthalle, Cologne (1984); Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris (1988); Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (*Sigmar Polke. Fotografien*, 1990); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and the Brooklyn Museum, New York (1990-1992); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Site Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (*Sigmar Polke: Photoworks. When Pictures Vanish*, 1995-1997); Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, and the Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin (1997-1998); and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg (*Sigmar Polke. Works on Paper 1963–1974*, 1999), among others.

More recently, Polke's work was featured in solo exhibitions at the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, and the Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk, Denmark (*Sigmar Polke. Alchimist*, 2001); the Dallas Museum of Art (*Sigmar Polke: History of Everything. Recent Paintings and Drawings*, 2002-2003, a version of which traveled to Tate Modern, London, in 2003-2004, which was curated there by Vicente Todolí as *Sigmar Polke: History of Everything*); Kunsthaus Zürich (*Sigmar Polke. Werke & Tage,* 2005); Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo (*Sigmar Polke: Alice in Wonderland*, which traveled to The National Museum of Art, Osaka, 2005-2006); Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg (*Sigmar Polke. Wir Kleinbürger! Zeitgenossen und Zeitgenossinnen. Die 1970er Jahre*, 2009-2010); and the Musée de Grenoble (2013-2014). The comprehensive retrospective *Alibis: Sigmar Polke, 1963-2010* was recently held at The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; and Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2014-2015). In April 2016, the Palazzo Grassi, Venice, will present Polke's first major retrospective in Italy.

During his lifetime, Polke was included in numerous international biennales, including documenta, the Bienal de São Paulo, and the Venice Biennale, and received a number of awards, such as the Venice Biennale's Golden Lion (1986), the Erasmus Prize (1994), the Carnegie Prize (1995), the Praemium Imperiale (2002), and the Roswitha Haftmann-Preis (2010), among others. Polke's work is included in the permanent collections of major museums around the world.

[1] Sigmar Polke, quoted in "Poison is Effective; Painting Is Not: Bice Curiger in Conversation with Sigmar Polke," in *Parkett*, no. 26 (1990), p. 19.
[2] Ibid., p. 20.

Special Event
Guided tour of the exhibition with Vicente Todolí
Saturday, May 7, 11 AM

Vicente Todolí's career in the visual arts spans more than 30 years, and includes positions as Chief Curator (1986-88) and then artistic director of the IVAM (Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, 1988-1996), before joining the Museu de Serralves as its founding director in 1996 until 2002. In 2002, he was appointed Director of Tate Modern, where he joined full-time in March 2003 and left in June 2010. At Tate Modern, he curated the exhibition *Sigmar Polke: History of Everything* (2003-2004), with the close involvement of Sigmar Polke. Todolí is currently the artistic director of Pirelli Hangar Bicocca, Milan.

For all press inquiries and to RSVP to the May 7 press preview, contact
Kim Donica at David Zwirner +1 212 727 2070 kim@davidzwirner.com

To attend the talk by Vicente Todolí, contact
Dane Mainella at David Zwirner +1 212 727 2070 dane@davidzwirner.com