

## News Release form Milton Keynes Gallery

31 Mar – 20 May 2001

- **Sigmar Polke: Music of Unclear Origin** – Forty gouaches from 1996
- **Marta Marce: Recent Work**

Press View: Fri 30 Mar 16.00 – 18.00

Private View: Fri 30 Mar 18.00 – 20.00 Admission Free

Born in 1941 in Oels, Silesia (now Olesnica, Poland), **Sigmar Polke** emigrated to West Germany in 1953 and has become one of the country's foremost painters.

*Music of Unclear Origin* is the title given to a group of paintings that Polke made in 1996, which have been described as 'cosmic tasters' of his entire artistic output. The complete series of forty gouaches will be on display in this exhibition.

Polke studied in Düsseldorf and came to prominence during the 1960's and 1970's, producing witty works similar in style to the Pop Art being made in Britain and America at the same time. He has borrowed freely from numerous and diverse sources, including advertising and popular culture and which combines a range of different styles and subject matter.

Since the 1960s, Polke has made pictures that mimic the use of Benday dots (The system of coloured dots used in photomechanical reproduction for newspapers, comics and advertising). Other artists such as the American Roy Lichtenstein have famously appropriated this technique, but whereas Lichtenstein's paintings have a simple clarity, Polke's imagery is layered and complex. His combination of painted dots (of varying size), precise brush drawing, washes and splashed paint, gives work such as *Music of Unclear Origin* its subversive and confusing appearance.

In their complex symbolism, these paintings often refer to historical events and in particular to Germany's recent past. *Music of Unclear Origin* (and Polke's painting as a whole) freely combines seemingly unconnected images in a manner which is rich in irony and humour, but which conceals their meaning. This ambiguity is accentuated by the titles, which lead 'a wild life of their own'. *You can prevent milk boiling over by putting a velvet insole in your shoe* is typically nonsensical and apparently independent of the work to which it refers.

During the 1970s Polke became preoccupied with photography, but returned to painting in the 1980s, experimenting with a wide range of materials. The forty works in *Music of Unclear Origin* are all gouaches (opaque watercolour paint), but clearly display the technical virtuosity which is typical of all Polke's painting, a body of work that has intrigued, puzzled and delighted viewers since the 1960s.

**Marta Marcé's** was born Vilafranca, Barcelona, in 1972 she studied in Barcelona and the Royal College of Art, graduating in 2000. She was selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2000.

Marcé literally transposes the basic structure of board games and computer games as a starting point for her brightly coloured abstract paintings. She sets clear rules for each one of her paintings. She follows these rules until the game terminates, which is when she has decided that the painting is finished. Though she is governed by strict criteria, the resulting works are not totally conceptual.

The rules set by Marcé allow chance to intervene. She manipulates the unexpected in her paintings by using dice and personal decisions to question the rules as the painting progresses. Marcé's paintings envelop the idea of expanding the different options of a basic grid as well as enriching it with chance and colour. The grid and concept of leaving things to chance mirrors the realities of Marcé's life. Marcé's paintings display clearly the set of rules that intervened on its making, and the exact places where those rules were broken. Marcé uses different types of paint and experiments with colour and texture inspired by colours found in her everyday life. Her paintings thus speak about process, freedom and beauty. She is currently working as an artist in residence as part of the Picker Fellowship at Kingston University 2000-2001.

### **In conversation**

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2001

Panel discussion about contemporary painting with artist Marta Marcé, art critic Sacha Craddock and MK G director Stephen Snoddy.

Tickets £3. Concessions £2. Pre-booking essential on 01908 676 900.

### **Exhibitions open**

Open Tues – Sat 10.00 – 17.00

Sun 12.00 – 17.00

Closed

Mondays

### **Limited Edition Print**

Untitled 2001,

100 Signed limited edition lithograph prints

Price: £50 inclusive of VAT, unframed.

Friends Price: £45

### **Publication**

Sigmar Polke "Music From An Unknown Source" Brice Kuriger

German Catalogue illustrating all the works in colour and with an essay (English – Language supplement).

*Music of Unclear Origin* has been organised by the institute for Foreign Cultural Relation, Stuttgart, in association with the Goethe Institute.

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