



Michal Bental

M.A. Student

Art Department

Scholarship at the University of Bonn, Nov. 2008 - April 2009

E-mail: mbental\_at\_gmail.com

### Sigmar Polke's Works during the Years 1962-1970

The German artist Sigmar Polke (1941- ) has produced many works that are puzzling in their variety already as a student at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the sixties. It seems that the artist has turned to a variety of different directions of thought and practice during these years. His works could be divided into several groups, as follows:

Pop paintings, where Polke presented cheap consumption products as sausages and socks; Dot paintings, which are a manual reproduction of newspaper pictures, by copying and enlarging the print raster to the canvas; Paintings on industrial decorated fabrics, where on some of them Polke painted images of kitsch and exoticism such as palm trees, and on others he appropriated images and styles taken from art history; Works produced "under the command of higher beings", according to Polke's own ascription in the respective titles and the fulfillment of the command itself in the corresponding work; and finally - potatoes installations.

I intend to expose the conceptual relations between these works. The most apparent association between them is the humor in which they are executed. Moreover, there are two other elements that appear in these works whose relations Polke challenges, namely the appropriation of elements of the consumption culture, and an examination of the means of representation.

I believe that in his early work Polke examined the means of representation in the popular consumption culture. He used humor subversively in order to reveal the signs which construct the conventions of representation in the popular culture, while testing their durability against his artistic manipulations.

The problem of representation has occupied also the philosophical discourse during the sixties. In my research I will examine Polke's work in light of that philosophical discourse and vice versa. I expect that this examination will shed light on both, and also on the way humor functions in the field of signs.