

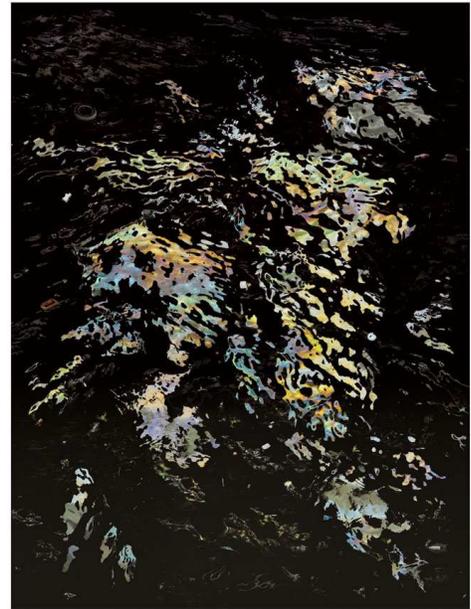
# GAGOSIAN GALLERY

October 20, 2011

## **PRESS RELEASE**

GAGOSIAN GALLERY  
522 WEST 21ST STREET  
NEW YORK, NY 10011  
GALLERY HOURS:

T. 212.741.1717  
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Tue – Sat: 10:00am– 6:00pm



*Bangkok II, 2011*  
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## **ANDREAS GURSKY**

Friday, November 4 – Saturday, December 17, 2011

Opening reception for the artist: Friday, November 4th, from 6 to 8 pm

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce a major exhibition by Andreas Gursky.

At the 21<sup>st</sup> Street gallery, Gursky will premiere *Bangkok*, a new series of large-scale works, in tandem with the majestic *Oceans* of 2010, which will be shown in New York for the first time.

Just as history painters of previous centuries found their subjects in the realities of everyday life, Gursky finds inspiration in his own spontaneous visual experience and via reports of global phenomena in the daily media. The resulting pictures have a formal congruence deriving from a bold and edgy dialogue between photography and painting, empirical observation and artfulness, conceptual rigor and spontaneity, representation and abstraction. Gursky's world view fuses the flux of life and nature with the stillness of metaphysical reflection.

In the *Oceans* (2009-10), Gursky relinquished his position behind the camera to work with satellite images of the world as raw material, resulting in contemporary *mappe del mondo* on a scale befitting the cosmic grandeur of the subject. On a flight from Dubai to Melbourne, Australia, Gursky began watching the flight-path program. Suddenly he saw the graphic representation – which depicts the edges and tips of sharply delineated land masses with wide blue expanses of ocean between – as a picture. The ensuing process from diagram to large-scale photographic work proved to be very involved. He sourced high-definition satellite photographs augmented from the Internet but given that these photographs were limited to exposing the land masses only, he was obliged to generate totally by artificial means the oceans and liminal zones that dominate his own images. Thus, in the darkly nuanced surfaces of the *Oceans* – for which he even consulted shoal maps to obtain the appropriate visual veracity – Gursky reconciles the division between the machine eye and the human eye, continuing the debates and practices begun in the nineteenth century regarding photography and the issue of artistic expression versus objective science.

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Neither empirical nor cartographic but rather determined by compositional principles, Gursky's *Oceans* possess that sense of the "terrible" sublime associated with Romantic landscape painting and twentieth century abstraction. The singular image *Antarctic* – an anthropomorphic land mass as inscrutable and uninhabitable as the sea – acts as a *coda* to the series: under the portents of global warming the icy, barren continent seems to be raising an apocalyptic finger, despite the beauty in its details.

It was serendipity rather than intention that found Gursky, one year later, shooting the Chao Phraya river that flows through Bangkok and empties into the Gulf of Thailand. Nevertheless, the relationship with the *Oceans* is clear: In the new *Bangkok* series, he moves in closer on his subject, capturing the details of the fast-flowing urban water mass through the lens of the abstract sublime. A major arterial waterway that is as compromised by manmade pollution as by disequilibrium in the natural hydrological regime, Chao Phraya is revealed by Gursky to be at once a dumping ground for all manner of manmade detritus (used condoms, a child's bed mattress, a car tire), a crucible for ecological disorder (as evidenced by a dead fish, and the pretty but devastating weed known as water hyacinth, floating in the water), and a reflecting, refracting surface for the modern city itself.

It is now common knowledge that ongoing natural disasters and human negligence compromise the well-being of the oceans and, thus, our own long-term existence. Add to this the recent alarm as rising flood waters in and around the Chao Phraya Basin threaten to prompt the next in a string of massive environmental catastrophes. In images that are as conceptually profound as they are formally dazzling, timeless and yet very much of their time, Gursky has touched a topical nerve in contemporary life, namely the impotence of humans in the face of increasing disequilibrium in the natural world that may once again render it uninhabitable.

A large-format, two-volume catalogue, containing sumptuous plates that document the *Ocean* series as well as selected earlier works and essays by distinguished art historians Norman Bryson and Werner Spies, was published by Gagolian Gallery in 2010 and is currently available.

**Andreas Gursky** was born in 1955 in Leipzig, former East Germany. He attended Folkwangschule, Essen (1978-81) and Staatliche Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf (1981-87). Recent major museum exhibitions include "Werke-Works 80-08", Kunstmuseen Krefeld (2008, toured to Moderna Museet, Stockholm and Vancouver Art Gallery in 2009); Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland (2007); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2007, toured to Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Sharjah Art Museum, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and Ekaterina Foundation, Moscow in 2007-08); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2001, touring to Reina Sofia, Madrid, Centre Pompidou, Paris, and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago in 2001-02). His work is included in important public and private collections throughout the world.

Gursky lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany.

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