

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

25 September 2015

PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

17–19 DAVIES STREET

LONDON W1K 3DE

GALLERY HOURS:

SUMMER HOURS (3–28 Aug):

T. 020.7493.3020

E. london@gagosian.com

Tue–Sat 10:00am–6:00pm

Mon–Fri 10:00am–6:00pm



THOMAS RUFF: *nature morte*

Thursday, 6 August–Friday, 25 September 2015

Opening reception: Thursday, 10th September, from 6:00 to 8:00pm

Due to digital photography, the negative, which I have used nearly every day for more than twenty-five years, has almost disappeared. If I ask my daughters what a negative is, they look at me wide-eyed, for they've never seen or used one. The negative was actually never considered for itself, it was always only a means to an end. It was the "master" from which the photographic print was made, and I think it is worth looking at these "masters."

—Thomas Ruff

Gagosian London is pleased to present recent work by Thomas Ruff.

Ruff is a leading innovator in the generation of German artists that propelled photography into mainstream art. Open and explorative, he has pushed the limits of the medium, harnessing technologies both old and new—including night vision, hand-tinting, and stereoscopy—to reconceptualize architectural, astrological, pornographic, and portrait photography. In the objective tradition of his former professors Bernd and Hilla Becher, Ruff's deadpan *Portraits* are characterized by a startling level of legibility; while in the *ma.r.s.* series, he amplified black-and-white NASA reconnaissance images with 3-D rendering and saturated color. In recent works, he has engaged the photogram, the camera-less technique advanced by Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy and others during the early twentieth century; and the visual and evocative properties of the photographic negative.

Ruff's recent *negatives* extend his explorations of the photogram, in which he used positive and negative imagery to create a mesmerizing photographic world of nebulous shadows, spheres, zigzags, and hard edges against richly colored backgrounds. Reversing the negative's role as a means to an end—the master image from which the print is created—he digitally transforms sepia-toned albumen prints into dramatically contrasting apparitions. The size of the prints—29 x 22 centimeters—roughly corresponds to the scale of the glass plates that could be exposed with a large camera during the nineteenth century. In the *negatives* shown at Gagosian Beverly Hills in 2014, Ruff portrayed posed nude subjects with white marble skin tones; in new works he imbues plants with sculptural dimensionality, heightening the form and character of each specimen. Reduced to a white silhouette, a vase of lilies resembles rising smoke; the bright puff of a drooping hydrangea is a focal point among hazy grey tones. Revisiting historical techniques to invent meta-photographic genres, Ruff continues to expand the subjects, possibilities, and appearance of images.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated publication with an essay by Philip Gefter.

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Thomas Ruff was born in 1958 in Zell am Harmersbach, Germany, and lives and works in Düsseldorf. He studied at Staatlichen Kunstakademie Düsseldorf beginning in 1977, and was a professor there from 2000 to 2006. Public collections include Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Tate Gallery, London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; and Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin. Selected solo exhibitions include "Thomas Ruff: Jpegs," Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2007); "Thomas Ruff," Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2009); "Thomas Ruff. Surfaces, Depths," Kunsthalle Wien (2009); "Thomas Ruff. Schwarzwald. Landschaft.," Museum für Neue Kunst, Freiburg (2009); "MCA DNA: Thomas Ruff," Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2011); "Thomas Ruff: ma.r.s.," Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain (2011–12); "Thomas Ruff: Works 1979–2011," Haus der Kunst, Munich (2012); "Thomas Ruff: Series," Sala Alcalá 31, Madrid (2013); and "Thomas Ruff: Lichten.," S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium (2014, traveled to Kunsthalle Düsseldorf).

For further inquiries please contact the gallery at london@gagosian.com or at +44.207.493.3020. All images are subject to copyright. Gallery approval must be granted prior to reproduction.

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