

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

### ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

#### Thomas Ruff Reinvents the Photogram at Gagosian Gallery

Michael Slenske



*ch.phg.03 / ch.phg.04, Thomas Ruff, 2013. Photography © Thomas Ruff and courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery*

A few years ago German-born, New York–based photographer Thomas Ruff posted a want ad on a forum about 3-D imaging, in search of someone who could create light refractions. After getting a response from professor and programmer Wenzel S. Spingler, Ruff set off on a two-year journey to realize his new “Photograms” series, currently on display at Gagosian Beverly Hills. With Spingler’s help, Ruff recreated the century-old technique of making photograms inspired by 1920s examples from Man Ray and László Moholy-Nagy. “I wanted to imitate some of these great works,” says Ruff, “but I also wanted to create a new type of photogram that pushes the medium a bit forward.”

By using a virtual darkroom, Ruff was able to add color and to shift perspectives and objects (all of which were computer generated but based on items including sticks, spirals, paper strips, and lenses) to achieve painterly results reminiscent of Kandinsky’s abstractions and Alice Aycock’s architectural interventions. Through this process, the photographer stumbled upon his next series, “Negatives,” by using a process to reverse vintage sepia-tone negatives of nudes he’d collected over the years (“a cheap trick with enormous consequences”), which gives the prints an almost futuristic blue tone. “I’ve used negatives for 30 years, but I never really looked at them. Now that they’re disappearing, I think it’s worth looking at them as objects,” says Ruff, who plans to further explore the series with negatives of landscapes, scientific images, perhaps even old Stieglitz and Steichen prints. “Right now I’m at the very beginning.”