

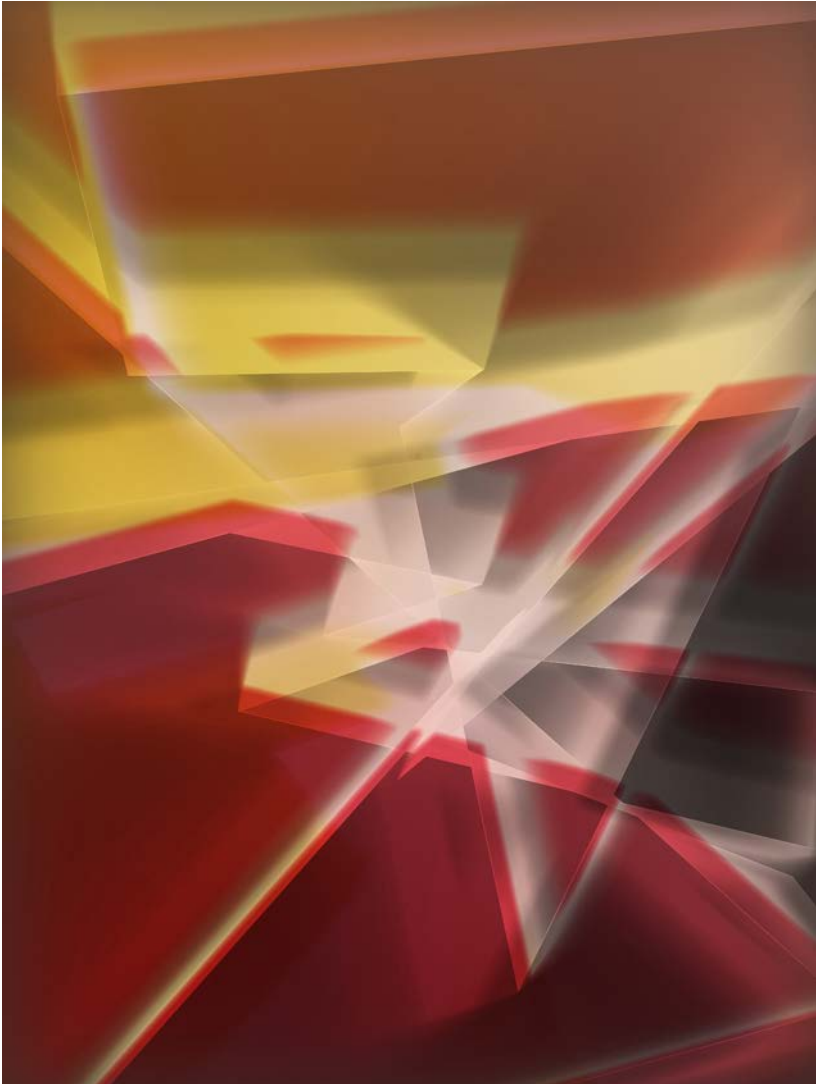


**MUSÉE D'ART
MODERNE ET
CONTEMPORAIN
SAINT-ÉTIENNE
MÉTROPOLE**

THOMAS RUFF

METAPHOTOGRAPHIE

14 MAY 2022 - 28 AUGUST 2022



The MAMC+ dedicates to German artist Thomas Ruff (1958) his first major exhibition in a museum in France.

This retrospective gaze concerning over forty years of his career aims to reveal the way in which the artist tirelessly questions the photographic medium itself, developing a "metaphotography", or, in other words, a photograph about photography. Through a selection of seventeen series, including one as yet unseen, the visit of around one hundred artworks restores a chronology of the various types of images and technical processes that he investigates, thus implicitly retracing a history of photography.

"I think photography is a very complicated medium, even though it seems to be very simple," Thomas Ruff deliberately emphasizes. Passionate since childhood about astronomy and photography, he developed his series of *Interiors* and *Portraits* in the early 1980s, while he was still a student of Bernd Becher's at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf. Although these artworks became emblematic of his work, he nevertheless explored many other approaches to photography, from the 1990s onwards choosing almost exclusively to use pre-existing images, which he manipulates.

The titles of his serial experiments illustrate the continually renewed heterogeneity of his subjects, which the exhibition reflects: *Stars*, *Newspaper Photographs*, *Nights*, *Nudes*, *Portraits, ma.r.s*, *Photograms*, *flower.s*, *Tableaux chinois*, and so on. This exploration of camera technology and the

production of images encompasses all kinds of photographs, while reinventing them, from satellite images to digital tools, to non-digital negatives and .jpeg. For this artist who draws on existing photography, it is basically a matter of simultaneously probing the medium's capacity for technological evolution and the diverse functions of images, while constantly questioning photographic objectivity.

The set of artworks brought together here showcases a quasi-scientific conceptual approach – at once rigorous and systematic, critical and informed – which engages in a reflexive exercise about what photography is and about the evolution of its possibilities, throughout the course of its technical developments. Like an abridged history of the medium, the exhibition offers a cutaway view and presents several major milestones from its origins to the present day.

The opening on the archaeological and scientific imagery of nineteenth-century pioneers then leads to the striking episode of plastic manipulations in the 1920–1930s, then to procedures pertaining to information, and to the military and police control of the 1960–1990 period. As for the second half of the visit, it is entirely allocated to the digital era. Therein, we witness the reconstruction of an unprecedented shift in visual technologies that have profoundly transformed both social behaviour and the artistic sphere.

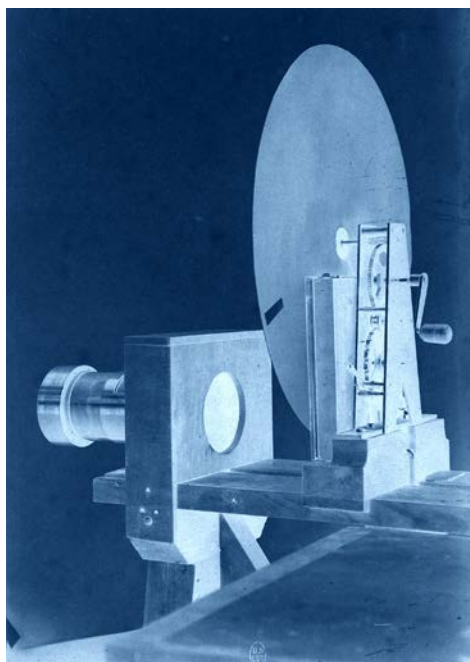
Lastly, the exhibition extends into two rooms presenting MAMC+ collections tending, on the one hand, towards the theme of anonymous

and amateur photography and on the other towards the notion of documentary objectivity. This affords the opportunity to highlight some of Thomas Ruff's filiations, while showcasing the museum's collection of images that are highly representative of the Düsseldorf school, in particular five prints by the artist from the early years of his practice.

An artist's book was also conceived, adapted from the directive principle of the exhibition in the form of a leporello or accordion book, unfolding in concertina. Thanks to its articulated strip, the ideal support for the deployment of a chronological series of images, this spectacular foldable object provides a fragmented yet continuous reading of the process of transformation photography has

experienced over time. While one image per series exhibited features on the front, Thomas Ruff exceptionally reveals on the back what he has until now always refrained from showing: the sources and techniques behind his work, which masterfully strives to exhaustively cover the reality of the photographic image.

Alexandre Quoi, Commissaire de l'exposition, responsable du département scientifique du MAMC+



Thomas Ruff, *negømarey_24*, 2016, C Print, 71 × 61 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

PARCOURS DE L'EXPOSITION

Bonfils

2021

In 2021, Thomas Ruff acquired reproductions of glass negatives from the Maison Bonfils, a professional photographic studio opened in Beirut in 1864 by Félix Bonfils together with his wife Marie Lydie and his son Adrien. Most of these almost 150-year-old negatives were in poor condition. They fascinated the artist as they clearly embodied photographic technique of the second half of the nineteenth century. Published by Bonfils in miscellaneous large-format albums, like the album *Souvenirs d'Orient* (1872), the photographs depict ancient sites and landscapes of the Middle East. At that time, it remained impossible to enlarge or reduce the print directly from a negative,

the concerned pictures had to be photographed again in the desired size before having a print made from these additional negatives. Moreover, originals were often altered—the background is darkened and the title and signature are applied on the reproduction. Often, several negatives of different sizes were produced from a sole motif, then used for the production of albums, while being treated with corresponding care, as they weren't the 'original negatives'. In this series, Thomas Ruff worked out the marks of time and improper treatment by making new prints from the reproduced negatives.



Thomas Ruff, *bonfils_04 - Vue générale du petit temple, détail de la porte. Thèbes (Medinet-Abou), Haute Égypte*, 2021, C-rint, 60 × 78 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Tripe

2018

Paper negatives, which Captain Linnaeus Tripe (1822–1902) had produced on behalf of the British government in Burma and Madras between 1856 and 1862 and which are now in the archives of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, were the starting point for the “Tripe” series. Thomas Ruff was able to view the surviving negatives in the format 30.5 × 38 cm and selected several of these for his own work. All of them showed clear signs of aging; some were damaged by mold, water, or chemical changes. In many of them, the thin layer of wax that had been applied to make the paper more transparent showed clear signs of creasing or breaking. Ruff had the negatives digi-tally reproduced and then converted them into positives, inverting the brownish hue of the negative to a cyan blue.

He duplicated these positives and changed the colour of the duplicates to the brown tone of the negatives. He superimposed the two positive images as digital layers and removed parts of the layer of the brownish image so that the coloration of the bluish layer partially shines through. In a second step, he enlarged the images so that the texture of the paper and all the processing, damage, and changes become visible. The neutral images of Victorian India thus acquire an almost painterly effect and allow a retrospective view of the technique and history of early travel photography.



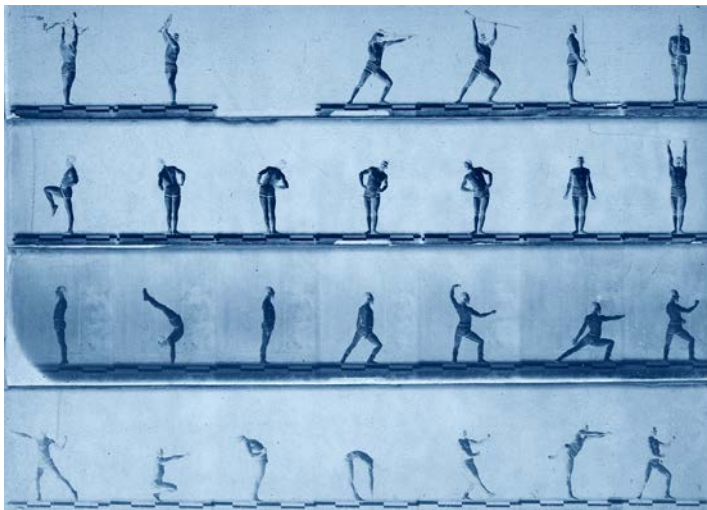
Thomas Ruff, *tripe_09 Amerapoora. My-au-dyk Kyoung*, 2018, C-Print, 80 × 103 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Negative [Negatives]

2014

Interested in photographic techniques at an early stage, Thomas Ruff began around 2014 to intensify his studies on the visual appearance of the source material of printed analogue photography: the 'negative'. To visualize the photographic reality and pictorial qualities, he transformed historical photographs into 'digital negatives'. In the process, he not only changed the light-dark distribution in the image. The brownish hue of the photographs printed on albumin paper also became a cool, artificial blue tone. The aim of the processing was to highlight the photographic 'negative', which in analogue photography was never actually the object of contemplation, but was rather always only a means to an end. In this series, it is treated as an 'original' worth viewing, from which a photographic print

is made and which, due to digital photography, is in danger of disappearing completely. The series covers the entire range of historical black-and-white photography and is divided into various subgroups. The starting point for the 'neg ϕ marey' sub-series is chronophotographic experiments by the medical doctor Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904), who took pictures of moving people and animals in the 1870s to study their biological movement phenomena. The scientist is considered as one of the pioneers of scientific photography, an area of photography that interested the artist since the late 1980s.



Thomas Ruff, *neg ϕ marey_02*, 2016, C Print, 22,4 × 31,4 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

flower.s

2018–present

Photograms of flowers by Lou Landauer (1897–1991), which Thomas Ruff had acquired, as well as his work on the Photogram series, gave him the idea of working with another photographic technique that has been used since the mid-nineteenth century: pseudo-solarization, also known as the Sabattier effect. This is a technique discovered by chance, with which, during exposure in the darkroom, the negative/positive is exposed to a diffuse second exposure, resulting in a partial reversal of light and shadow areas in the photographic image. Ruff first digitally photographed flowers or leaves arranged on a light table.

During the subsequent processing on the computer, he applied the Sabattier effect. Similar to the Photogram, he uses contemporary means to refer to an “old” photographic technique and shifts the limits of its possibilities.



Thomas Ruff, *flower.s_19*, 2019, C-Print, 99,4 × 79,4 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Thomas Ruff, *flower.s_05*, 2018, C-Print, 100 × 80 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Fotogramme [Photogrammes]

2012–present

Fascinated by photograms from the 1920s, Thomas Ruff decided to explore the genre and develop his own contemporary version of these camera-less photographs. Since the artist was disturbed by the limitations of analog photograms—an image can only be produced once and cannot be enlarged at will, and colour is also not possible—he used a virtual darkroom to create a simulation of the direct exposure of objects on light-sensitive paper. In this, he could lay objects (lenses, rods, spirals, paper strips, spheres, and other things) generated by a 3D program on or over a sheet of digital

paper, correct their position and, in some cases, expose them to coloured light. This enabled him to control the projection of the objects on the background in the virtual space and print the image rendered by the computer in any size he wanted. In this way, he succeeded in transferring the idea and aesthetics of the pio-neers of the “camera-less photography” of the 1920s (Christian Schad, Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy ...) to generate images with light into the twenty-first century using a technique appropriate to his own time.



Thomas Ruff, *phg.01_I*, 2013, C-Print, 255 × 185 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

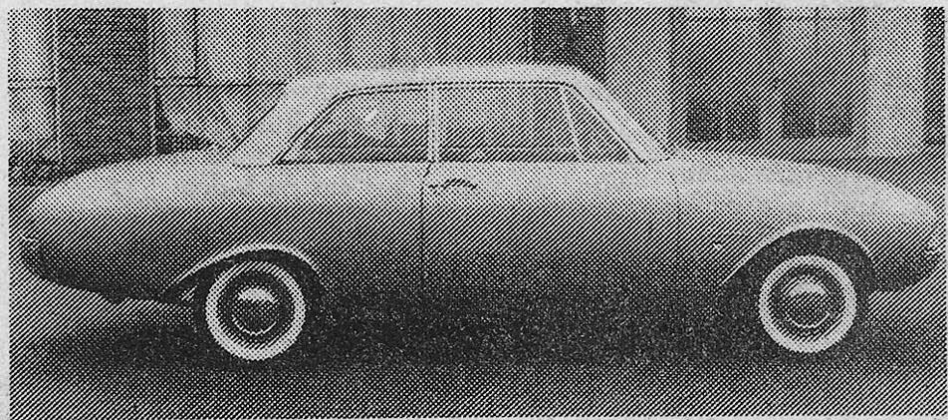
Thomas Ruff, *r.phg.03*, 2012, CPrint, 240 x 185 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Zeitungsfotos [Photographies de presse]

1990-1991

Between 1981 and 1991, Thomas Ruff collected over 2,500 newspaper photographs from German-language dailies and weeklies. They are pictures that interested him or struck him as odd in some way. They cover all aspects of newspaper reportage: politics, finance, sports, culture, sciences, technology, history, and current events. The motifs reflect a kind of collective visual world of a specific generation. To be printed in the newspapers, the images were not chosen according to artistic criteria

but rather by editorial considerations with the aim of illustrating a news story. Ruff narrowed his "archive" down to a selection of 400 images, which he had reproduced and printed in double column width (at a scale of 2:1) with no words of explanation. He settled on this procedure in order to focus on the appearance of the Newspaper Photographs and to question what information is left when the image is isolated from its function.



Thomas Ruff, *Zeitungsfoto 049*, 1990, C-print, 8,5 × 19,4 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Andere Porträts [Autres portraits]

1994–1995

In 1992, while conducting research into the issue of "composite faces", Ruff came across the so-called Minolta Montage Unit, an image-generating device used by several German State Criminal Police Offices in the 1970s in order to create identikit images. The device uses mirror optics to splice four portrait photos into a single new portrait. While Ruff had hitherto tried to reconstruct faces, he now found it more interesting to construct artificial faces not taken from reality but nevertheless conceivable. He wanted to address this type of image manipulation, which recurs repeatedly throughout the history of photography (be it by double exposure, retouching, various

darkroom techniques, or now with digital image processing) without actually using one of the techniques in question. The idea was for the image to arise before the camera and to be recorded in a single shot. Ruff therefore borrowed such a device from the Polizeihistorische Sammlung (Police History Collection) in Berlin and combined two of his own portrait photos in each case to create a new portrait. He then photographed the new image made in this way and used the slide as the basis for a silkscreen.



Thomas Ruff, *anderes Porträts Nr. 122/113*, 1994/1995, silkscreen on paper, 52 × 37 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Thomas Ruff, *anderes Porträts Nr. 122/138*, 1994/1995, Silkscreen on paper, 52 × 37 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Porträts [Portraits]

1990-1991

Around 1980, Thomas Ruff began to concern himself for the first time with the genre of "portraits"; it was a type of image that had, at the time, as good as vanished from the art of the day. Alongside portrait work for the Düsseldorf-based band EKG (Ruff was its Art Director), he experimented with the various opportunities portraits offered and made an intensive study of "portrait" as a genre. In the end, he chose a neutral image of the face and upper torso that emphasized the portrayed person's facial features and avoided any psychologizing interpretation. The idea was to photograph each person as if she or he were a plaster bust, because, according to Ruff, a photograph only reproduces the surface of things anyway. The portraits were taken with the sitters wearing their everyday clothes and

with a calm and serious look on their faces. Any form of emotional involvement such as smiles, grins, or flirting with the camera was eschewed. Ruff intuitively chose as models for the portraits persons he actually knew: friends and acquaintances of his own age whom he had met at the academy or in Düsseldorf's nightlife. Starting from 1984, Thomas Ruff experimented with the dimensions of his portraits. When, in 1986, he managed to make five prints on the largest photo paper available, he discovered that a completely new picture had emerged. The person's gaze and expression were intensified by the enlargement, and the image's visual presence likewise foregrounded. In 1991, he was forced to discontinue the series as the photographic paper he had been using for his prints ceased to be available.



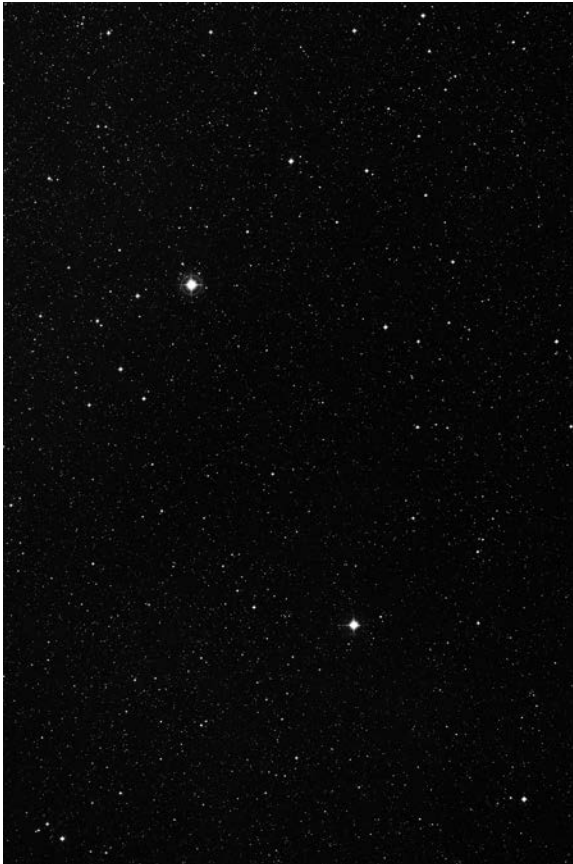
Thomas Ruff, *Porträt (R. Müller)*, 1986, C Print, 210 x 165 cm. Collection MAMC+. Deposit from the Centre national des arts plastiques – ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, 1991. © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Sterne [Étoiles]

1989–1992

As a schoolboy, Ruff was as fascinated by astronomy as he was by photography. To him, it therefore seemed only logical to turn the nocturnal sky into the theme for more or less abstract images that were to consist of a black surface with many white dots. Since he did not see how he would be able to achieve the quality of professional astronomic images with the photographic equipment available to him,

he resolved to work with original copies of the 1,212 negatives of the “European Southern Observatory” (ESO) archive. The archive houses a collection of scientific images of the firmament in the southern hemisphere taken using a special telescope in the Andes. Ruff chose sections from these negatives (sized 29 × 29 cm) that he defined according to six different categories.



Thomas Ruff, *18h 42m/-75°*, 1992, C-print, 200 × 134 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Nächte [Nuits]

1992–1996

Night pictures of events during the Gulf War (1990–91), broadcast on various television channels, awakened Thomas Ruff's interest in night vision devices. Originally developed for military purposes, the device captures occurrences at night in a greenish light with the help of a light intensifier. Fascinated by the technique and the possibility of making

the "invisible" visible, Ruff acquired a light intensifier for his camera and began taking pictures of backyards and streets in Düsseldorf environs. Later, he extended his nocturnal studies to other cities.



Thomas Ruff, *Nacht 1 I*, 1992, C-print, 20,5 × 21 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Thomas Ruff, *Nacht 7 I*, 1992, C-print, 20,5 × 21 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Thomas Ruff, *Nacht 9 I*, 1992, C-print, 20,5 × 21 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

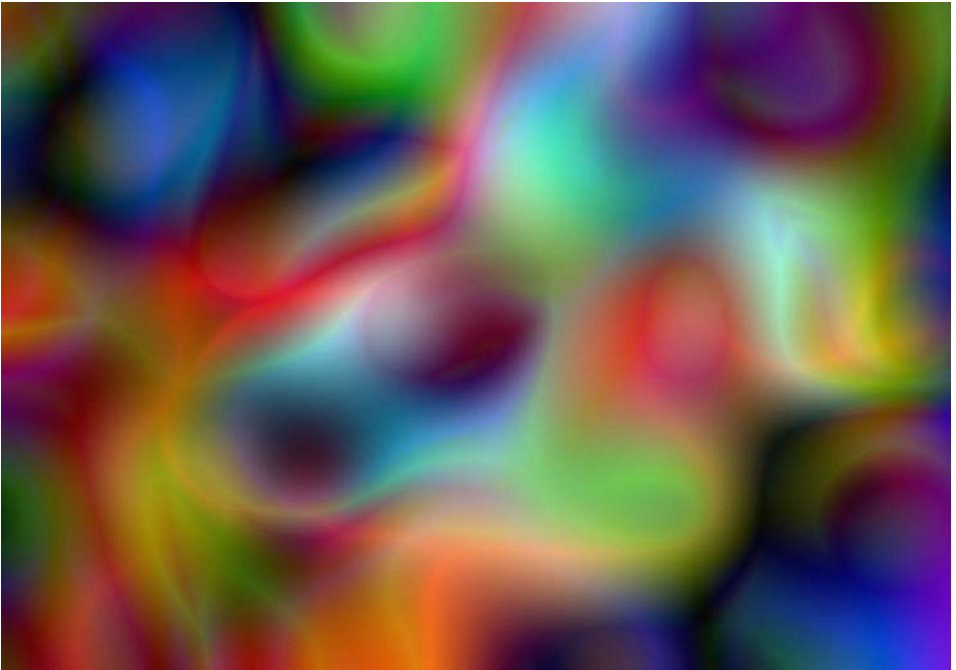
Thomas Ruff, *Nacht 10 I*, 1992, C-print, 20,5 × 21 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

***Substrate* [*Substrat*]**

2001–aujourd’hui

While searching for image material for the nudes, Thomas Ruff noticed that the virtual images on the Internet essentially no longer represented reality but were merely visual stimuli conveyed by purely electronic means. The flood of images in the net, where images and information get superimposed, hardly allow the viewer an opportunity to determine what of the image information is real and what is virtual. Ruff set out to penetrate this terrain

of visual “nothingness” using his experience in digital image processing. To this end, he used comic images as the material, superimposing these in several layers and multiplying them with one another until he had an image that was more or less devoid of meaning.



jpgs

2004–2008

The visual starting point of the *jpgs* are images that are distributed worldwide through the Internet, as well as scans of postcards and illustrations from photobooks. The artist was interested in the digital geometrical structure common to the images, which forms the basis of the .jpeg format, the standard compression format used for digital images, with which the pixel structure is broken down into image squares of 8×8 pixels during the storage process, whereby each image square is compressed independently of the others and simplified according to specific rules. When the image information reduced in this way is displayed enlarged, the respective group of pixels becomes visible as a square block in a grid.

This is actually a mistake that is perceived as disturbing; for Thomas Ruff, however, it is a fascinating artefact that can heighten the viewer's perception. By intensifying the pixel structure and simultaneously enlarging the overall image, the artist creates new images, which, seen up close, resemble a geometric colour pattern, but becomes a photographic image when viewed from a greater distance. By using the entire range of images published and discussed globally in recent decades, he makes the series almost a visual encyclopedia of the world of media images and a reflection of its characteristics determined by the medium.



Thomas Ruff, *jpeg ny01*, 2004, C-print, 256 × 188 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022



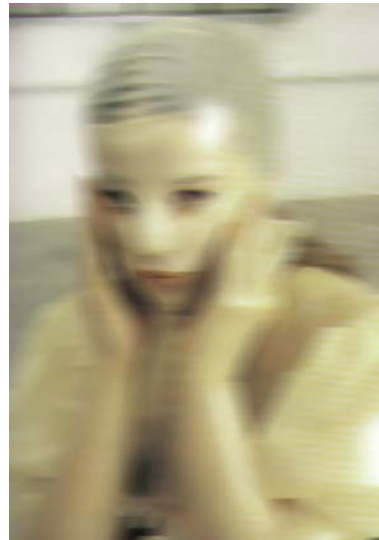
Thomas Ruff, *jpeg ib02*, 2007, C-print, 243 × 188 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Nudes [Nus]

1999–2012

Around 1998, Thomas Ruff began to work on nude photography and, at the same time, began experimenting with computer-generated, abstract pictures made of pixels. Through Internet research into the genre of nude photography, he came across the field of pornography and the disposable images of "thumbnail galleries" in the World Wide Web. Due to the poor resolution (72 dpi), they had a rough pixel structure, which resembled the one he had been experimenting with for abstract pixel images. He decided to process them in such a way that the pixel structure was only just barely visible when enlarging the images but changed them by using fuzziness and other blurring techniques,

modifying the colouring and removing intrusive details. By doing so, he lent the "obscene" images a painterly appearance and focused on the structure and composition of the image. The selection of source images was based on such considerations as image format, lighting, colouring, or presentation. In the nudes Thomas Ruff wanted to cover the wide range of sexual fantasies and practices currently on offer on the Internet by professionals and amateurs, under categories like Babes, Blonde, Cheerleader, Gay Group, Anal, Fetich, Nylon, Bondage, or Hardcore.



Thomas Ruff, *nudes lk18*, 2000, C-print, 156 × 112 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Thomas Ruff, *nudes asd04*, 2001, C-print, 124 × 92 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

press++

2004–2008

The source materials for the series *press++* are mainly black-and-white press photographs from the 1930s to the 1980s, originating primarily from the archives of American newspapers and magazines. Thomas Ruff scanned the front and back sides of the original documents and combined the two sides in order to merge the partially edited photograph on the front side with all the texts, comments, and traces of use on the back. The disrespectful treatment of this type of photography becomes visible

when printed in large format, since, for the editors of newspapers, these photographs are not aesthetically valuable products but merely transmitters of information without artistic value. Similar to the *Newspaper Photographs* from the early 1990s, Thomas Ruff chose images that cover all aspects of newspaper reportage—from politics to society, from science to technology, from culture to fashion.



Thomas Ruff, *press++21.11*, 2016, C-print, 260 × 185 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Thomas Ruff, *press++32.15*, 2016, C-print, 230 × 185 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Tableaux chinois

2019–aujourd’hui

For many years, Thomas Ruff has been working with a subject that also has a firm place in photography: the propaganda image, which depicts an “idealized world.” For *Tableaux chinois*, the artist scanned images from books on Mao published in China, as well as from the magazine *La Chine*, published and distributed worldwide by the Chinese Communist Party. He stored them in such a way that the offset halftone was preserved. He then duplicated the images and converted the offset halftone of the duplicates into a large pixel structure. In

the course of further work on the computer, he placed these new images, which were provided with a digital image structure, as a second and/or third layer over the original scan and then selectively removed parts of the second or third level. The resulting new image thus has both the halftone of the “analog” offset printing and the “digital” structure of the pixel image. The propaganda images of the twentieth century are thus transported into the visual language of the twenty-first century and unmasked as manipulative images.



Thomas Ruff, *tableau chinois_11*, 2019, C-Print, 240 x 185 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

ma.r.s

2010–2014

While conducting research on images from outer space, Thomas Ruff came across photos of Mars taken from 2006 onwards using a HiRISE (High Resolution Imaging Science Experience) camera. The camera is on board the Mars Renaissance Orbiter launched by NASA in August 2005 and transmits via satellite detailed images of the surface of the planet Mars to Earth. The images are intended to provide scientists with more precise knowledge of the surface, atmosphere, and water distribution on Mars. Ruff processed these very naturalistic and yet strange images in several steps: Among other things, he transformed the black-and-white images, which were photographed vertically downwards into views from an angle, and then added colour in such that the surface of the distant planet appears immediately accessible and almost familiar. The works in the 3D-*ma.r.s.* subgroup are

photographs that were produced using the so-called anaglyph process. They combine two partial stereoscopic images of the same landscape formation, taken from slightly different positions. These are coloured in complementary colours (red/green or red/cyan) and then printed superimposed rather than side by side. The separation of the right and left partial image is done with anaglyph glasses with correspondingly coloured lenses or foils. When the image is viewed, the colour filters delete the respective colour of the partial images and make the complementary colour black. Since both eyes see different images as a result, a spatial, three-dimensional image is created in the brain.



Thomas Ruff, *press++21.11*, 2016, C-print, 260 × 185 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

Thomas Ruff, *press++32.15*, 2016, C-print, 230 × 185 cm. Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

THOMAS RUFF & COLLECTIONS MAMC+

The *Metaphotography* exhibition visit is extended into two rooms featuring MAMC+ collections, *Double I*, with a focus on its photography section. The first room looks at the question of anonymous amateur photography, as questioned by artists such as Christian Boltanski, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Gerhard Richter, and Sigmar Polke, while the second focuses on the notion of objectivity through a comparison between French artist Patrick Tosani and the representatives of the Düsseldorf school. It affords an opportunity to highlight some of Thomas Ruff's filiations, as one of the artist-photographers who has investigated the history and technologies of photography the most, broaching a wide range of themes and experiments that regularly call on the field of anonymous and amateur photography.

The MAMC+ holds a collection that is highly representative of the Düsseldorf School and, specifically, conserves five early works by Thomas Ruff: three photographs from the emblematic *Portraits* series, as well as two prints from the *Häuser* [Houses] series. Trained at the fine-arts academy in Düsseldorf, the artist follows in the footsteps of the objective documentary photography of Bernd and Hilla Becher, who were his professors. Created between 1987 and 1991, the *Häuser* series directly inherits the Bechers' shooting

process, through the systematic point of view, neutrality, and stark lighting shared by all of these images. Ruff usually takes his photographs of the exteriors of buildings during the months of the year when the sky is often overcast. Influenced by the Bauhaus architectural photographs in the post-war period, Ruff selected ordinary buildings, built between 1950 and 1970, in Düsseldorf and its surrounding region. Through his photographs in an imposing format, he monumentalises the austere architecture of the German reconstruction era. The absence of any human presence and the retouching applied to the photographs, such as the removal of elements of urban landscape (trees, road signs, etc.) lead the viewer to focus all of their attention on the buildings.

THOMAS RUFF & COLLECTIONS MAMC+

Respectively a painter and a photographer, Bernd and Hilla Becher discovered in 1959 what they consider to be one of the archaeological remains of a dying industrial society. In their own way, they became a part of the late-nineteenth-century tradition of inventory for heritage purposes, while also perpetuating the spirit of New Objectivity and photography of the 1930s in Germany. Recorded by the photographic chamber, strictly framed frontally with no effects sought, the headframes of mine pits, blast furnaces, water towers, silos, houses, and gasometers constitute typological series.

Typology: Headframes of Mine Pits (1996) was especially created for the MAMC+. The work features the headframe of the Puits Marseille de Saint-Étienne, which has since been destroyed. The hanging of twelve photographs strictly grouped and inscribed within a rectangle hones the attention towards the formal variations of buildings with similar functions and that sometimes illustrate the local specificities of their site. Contributing to some of the profound changes that transformed the use of photography in the 1960–70s, as teachers at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, the Bechers influenced a whole generation of artists, including Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Thomas Ruff, and Thomas Struth.

The latter first studied painting with Gerhard Richter before attending Bernd and Hilla Becher's photography classes. While he retained from the former the questioning of images, he learned from the latter a taste for visual processes, methodology, and inventory. During his studies, he cut out photographs of houses and buildings from magazines, before starting to photograph the streets of Düsseldorf. Working in series, in the 1980s he created photographs of urban environments in black and white. The precision of these compositions and their formats led to the highly pictorial aesthetic of his photographs. Considering architecture as revelatory of the values and structures of a society, Thomas Struth illustrated the social and economic development of cities in his photos of building and urban landscapes. The sites and cities photographed convey the progressive homogenisation of a globalised architecture as much as the consequences of the rapid growth of economies in the late twentieth century.



Thomas Ruff, *Selfportrait*, 1991, Collection of the artist © ADAGP, Paris 2022

THOMAS RUFF IN A FEW KEY DATES

1958: Birth at Zell am Harmersbach (Forêt-Noire), Germany

1972: Starts becoming interested in astronomy and buys a small telescope

1974: Acquires his first camera and learns the basics of photographic technique

1977: Attends the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and is accepted the following year into Bernd Becher's legendary photography class

1979: Starts the series of *Interiors*

1981: Creates the first images of the Portraits series and starts to exhibit his work

1985: Completes his studies at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf

1995: Represents Germany at the Venice Biennale

2001-2006: Professor at the Düsseldorf Art Academy

2001: Travelling retrospective exhibition *Thomas Ruff. 1979 to the Present*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden

2017: Retrospective exhibition *Thomas Ruff. Photographs 1979-2017*, Whitechapel Gallery, Londres

2020: Exhibition *Thomas Ruff*, K20 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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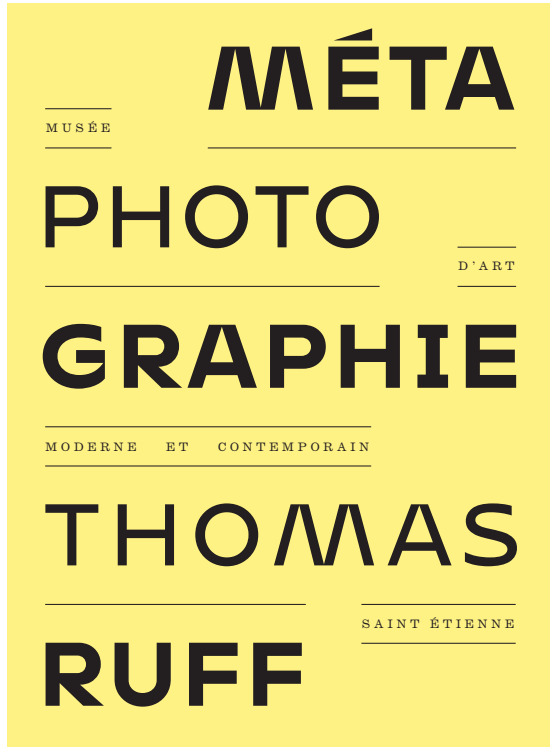


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THE EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

Thomas Ruff. Metaphotographie

The MAMC+ publishes an artist's book in the form of a *leporello*. Unfolded over nearly three metres, the book presents a chronology of the photographic processes and genres explored by the artist. On the its, it shows a selection of the works exhibited while on its back, it displays each of the corresponding sources and techniques used by Thomas Ruff.

Text by Alexandre Quoi, chief curator.

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