

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

PRESS RELEASE

2016.12.9



Thomas RUFF

2016.12.10 (Sat.) -
2017.3.20 (Sun.)

Exhibition Title	Thomas RUFF		
Period	Saturday, December 10, 2016 – Sunday, March 12, 2017 10:00 - 18:00 (until 20:00 on Fridays and Saturdays). Note: Tickets available until 30 minutes before closing		
	Closed: Mondays, (Open on January 2 & 9), December 29-January 1, January 10		
Venue	21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (Galleries 7-14)	Number of Exhibited Works	about 160
Admission	Adult: ¥1,000 (¥800) / University: ¥800 (¥600) / Elem/JH/HS: ¥400 (¥300) / 65 and over: ¥800 Combi ticket for "The Boundary between Kogei and Design" (December 10 - March 12): Adult: ¥1,700 (¥1,400) / University: ¥1,400 (¥1,100) / Elem/JH/HS: ¥700 (¥600) / 65 and over: ¥1,400 *() indicate advance ticket and group rates (20 or more)		
	Advance Tickets: Ticket PIA (Tel +81-[0]0570-02-9999: [Exhibition ticket P code] 767-718 [Combi ticket P code] 767-716) Lawson Ticket (Tel +81-[0]0570-000-777: [Exhibition ticket L code] 56908 [Combi ticket L code] 56971) Tickets Sales: Until 12 March 2017		
Organized by	21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (Kanazawa Art Promotion and Development Foundation), The Yomiuri Shimbun		
Grants from	Television Kanazawa Corporation		
In cooperation with	Lufthansa Cargo AG, ALL NIPPON AIRWAYS CO., LTD		
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About the Exhibition

Thomas Ruff (born in 1958 in Zell am Harmersbach, Germany) has been a leading figure in contemporary photography since the 1990s when he emerged as part of the Becher School. Along with Andreas Gursky and Thomas Struth, Ruff studied photography with Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf.

The exhibition introduces a wide range of works by this world-renowned photographer, stretching from his earliest efforts to his most recent and never-before-shown photographs. Ruff was first acclaimed for a series of huge two-meter-high portraits. Since then, he has explored a variety of themes, including architecture, urban landscapes, nudes, and celestial bodies. Through these subjects, he has developed a unique vision of the world we live in.

The medium of photography, closely entwined with our vision and perception, is another important theme in Ruff's work. He searches for new possibilities in photographic expression using a multitude of images as his materials. These not only include Ruff's own pictures but everything from digital images from the Internet to old photographs he has collected.

This exhibition consists of a total of 18 series, approximately 160 works, including Ruff's first effort *Interieurs*; *Porträts*, which earned him widespread acclaim; *cassini* and *ma.r.s.*, inspired by his boyhood interest in outer space; and *nude* and *jpeg*, which examine visual and information spaces in the age of the Internet, and his most recent photographs, *press ++*.

Exhibition Features

Thomas Ruff's first major touring exhibition in Japan—Explore the artist's world through his most important photographic series.

Thomas Ruff—one of world's foremost contemporary photographers. His first large-scale touring exhibition in Japan is being held in Tokyo and Kanazawa.

This exhibition showcases some 160 works drawn from 18 series, including Ruff's early *Interieurs* and widely acclaimed *Porträts*, his *nudes* and *jpeg* series examining digital-age visual and information spaces, and his latest series *press++* inspired by his acquisition of an archive of press photographs from a newspaper company.



press++11.07
2016

New “photography” for our times.

Digital technology and the Internet have broadly transformed the environment of photography. Ruff's art embodies an inquiry into photography's proper character in our times. In the unusual features of Ruff's work, moreover—such as his use of photos he does not take and large-format prints—we see the Ruff pushing the limits of photography.

An artist talk by Thomas Ruff—only at the Kanazawa exhibition.

Thomas Ruff will hold an artist talk in Kanazawa. This will be a rare and precious opportunity to hear Ruff himself explain his production concepts, artwork themes, and what photography means to him.

Over 30 additional works will resonate richly, deeply in the gallery spaces.

Over 30 works have been added for the Kanazawa exhibition. What deeper levels of meaning will they reveal in this museum's unique galleries designed by architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa of SANAA?

Related Programs

Artist Talks

Lecturer Thomas RUFF

Questioners MASUDA Rei (Chief Researcher, The National Museum of Modern Art), TANAKA Yoshihisa (Art Director for this exhibition),

NAKATA Koichi (Curator, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa)

Date/ time Saturday December 10, 2016 14:00-16:00

Venue Lecture Hall, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Admission Free

Capacity 80 people

Application By museum website from 10:00 am Friday November 25, first come basis (With consecutive interpretation)

Lecture “Thomas Ruff: From Identity Photo to Photo Identity”

Lecturer SHIMIZU Minoru (Photography critic; Professor, Doshisha University)

Date/ time Saturday January 28, 2017 14:00-15:30

Venue Lecture Hall, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Admission Free

Capacity 80 people

Application Not necessary. First 80 arrivals that day

*Program content may be subject to change

Related publication

Editing: The Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art;

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa; The Yomiuri Shimbun

Texts: MASUDA Rei (The Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art),

NAKATA Koichi (21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa)

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Artist Profile

Thomas Ruff

Born in 1958 in Zell am Harmersbach, Germany.

From 1977 to 1985, Ruff studied photography with Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. After first making the *Interieurs* series, which focused on typical interior scenes in German houses, Ruff received a great deal of acclaim for *Porträts*, a series of portraits of the artist's friends that he enlarged to a huge size. He subsequently produced works with a variety of themes, including architecture, urban landscapes, nudes, and celestial bodies, and developed series based on specific concepts.

Since the 1990s, Ruff has been using digital processing in his work, as seen in series such as *nudes* and *jpeg*, which consist of manipulated versions of widely circulated images from the Internet. Other series include *cassini* and *ma.r.s.*, which are made up of digitally processed photographs of astral bodies such as Mars that were taken with a space probe. In these series, Ruff sets out to restructure images using materials that were shot by other people. By consistently identifying the elements of information and expression that are a unique aspect of the photographic medium, Ruff has continually upended our preconceived notions about photography. Ruff has also worked as an educator, accepting a teaching post at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 2000 and remained at the school until 2006.

Having held exhibitions throughout the world, Ruff is now one of the preeminent contemporary German photographers. In addition to participating in international exhibitions such as documenta 9 (1992) and the Venice Biennale (1995), he staged a retrospective of his work that traveled around Europe from 2001 to 2004, and a large-scale solo show at the Haus der Kunst (Munich) in 2012.



2

Exhibits

Porträts

At first glance, these portraits have the appearance of regular ID photographs. But when we stand in front of the works, enlarged to a massive degree (210 x 165cm), they create a completely different impression. The fact that ordinary portrait photographs take on such a puzzling, mysterious quality suggests that the photographic medium is equipped with a unique mechanism. These early works, which helped establish Ruff's name, use a simple approach to raise a variety of questions. The series was also a forerunner in the use of the large color print, which went on to be a standard format in contemporary photography.



Porträt (R.Müller)
1986
C-print, 210 x 165 cm

3

l.m.v.d.r.

This series' title is made up of the initials of the German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, a leading proponent of modernist architecture. After first being commissioned by a museum to take pictures of Mies' works, Ruff undertook a project to photograph all of the architect's works from a specific period. In the process, he thoroughly researched past photographs of the buildings, and took his own pictures of the works or obtained existing photographs. Then, by digitally processing these images, Ruff embarked on a visual exploration of this master of modern architecture.

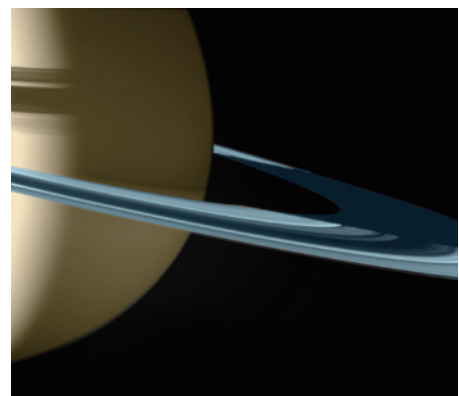


w.h.s. 01
2000
C-print, 185 x 245 cm

4

cassini

Ruff has maintained a keen interest in outer space since his childhood. His 2008 series *cassini* makes use of pictures of Saturn and its satellites that were taken by the Cassini space probe, launched by NASA in 1997. These images of celestial bodies, with alternatively abstract and geometrical designs, were created by manipulating the colors and tones of pictures from the Internet.

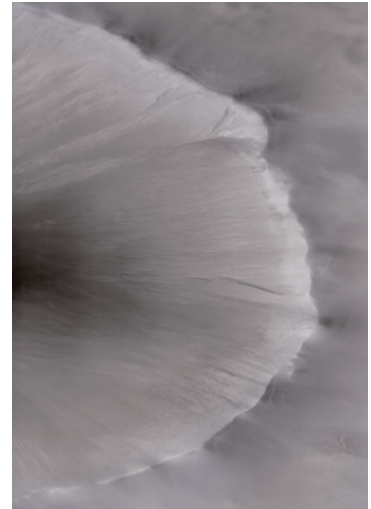


cassini 10
2009
C-print, 98.5 x 108.5 cm

5

ma.r.s.

ma.r.s. also makes use of images that were taken by a NASA space probe. The probe's camera, which began orbiting Mars in 2006, continues to send a wide range of information about the planet's surface back to Earth. By digitally processing the angles and colors of the image data, Ruff explored the potential of landscape photography through a lens that was trained on the distant Red Planet. (Note: Among the works from *ma.r.s.* presented in this exhibition will be some 3D photographs.)

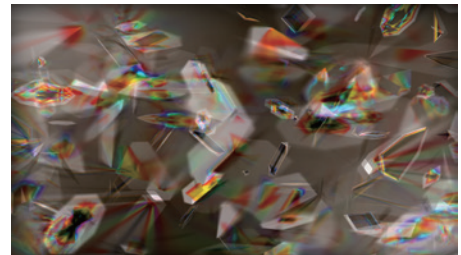


6

ma.r.s. 19
2011
C-print, 255 x 185 cm

photogram

The word "photogram," the title of this series, refers to a photographic technique developed by Moholy-Nagy László and others in the late 1920s. Without using a camera, the technique involves placing objects on photosensitive paper and capturing the shadows and light as concrete forms. Ruff began using the approach in his work in 2012. Traditional photograms could not be retouched and were limited to monochromatic expressions, but Ruff introduced the element of digital processing, which had long been a part of his practice. In a virtual darkroom inside the computer, he positions and colors objects, creating works by freely manipulating images.

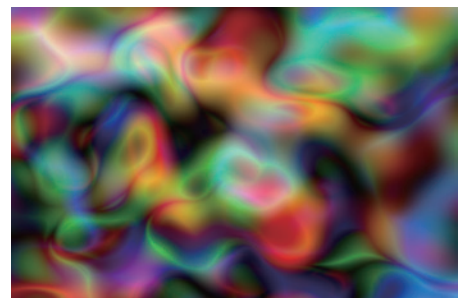


7

phg.12
2015
C-print, 185 x 310 cm

Substrate

Are the millions of Internet images, so numerous as to be uncountable, reflective of reality? Or are they simply visual stimulants produced by combining RGB colors? Ruff began making the *nudes* series with anonymous pornographic pictures that are ubiquitous on the Internet and then began deconstructing the images. By digitally manipulating them to the point where it is impossible to identify the original forms in the pictures (derived from Japanese manga and anime), Ruff strips the pictures of meaning and information.



8

Substrat 31 III
2007
C-print, 186 x 268 cm

jpeg

Along with *nudes* and *Substrate*, *jpeg* focuses on the deconstruction of digital images, but the structure of the images is another element in this series. The title refers to a method compressing for digital images – at present, it is the most common format of this kind in the world. Making use of the format's special characteristics (compressing an image too much causes block noise, etc.), Ruff gives visual a form to the structure of the images.

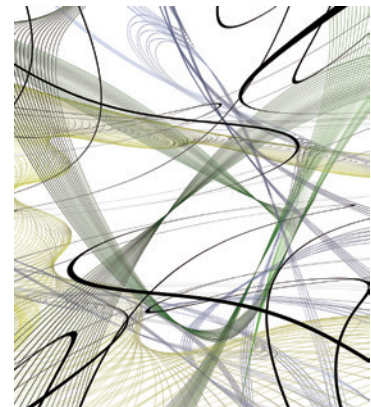


9

jpeg ny01
2004
C-print, 256 x 188 cm

cycles

This series, which Ruff began in 2008, is based on the artist's interest in mathematics and physics. Inspired by diagrams (engravings) of magnetic fields in the British physicist James Clerk Maxwell's (1831-1879) study of electromagnetism, Ruff reproduced linear forms based on various mathematical formulas using a 3D computer program and restructured them in a digital space. Then he converted them into two-dimensional works, giving the complex combinations of curved lines the appearance of planetary orbits or abstract drawings.



10

cycles 3065
2008
Inkjet print on canvas, 266×236cm

Images for Publicity

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