

For immediate release

## THOMAS RUFF

February 11 – March 13, 2010

Opening reception: Thursday, February 11, 6 – 8pm

Press preview with the artist: February 11, 5:30 – 6pm



*cycles 3080*, 2009. Pigment print on canvas.  
100 3/4 x 81 1/8 x 2 3/4 inches (256 x 206 x 7 cm)

David Zwirner is pleased to present Thomas Ruff's sixth solo exhibition at the gallery, marking the New York debut of new work in two series: *cycles* and *cassini*.

Among the most influential photographers working today, Ruff has redefined photography's conceptual possibilities, simultaneously capturing and questioning the essence of photography as both a means and a tool for visual experience. Over the past twenty-five years, he has approached various photographic genres in his work, including portraiture, the nude, landscape and architectural photography. He carries out these investigations using his own analog and digital photographs, computer-generated images, alongside images culled from scientific archives, print media, and the Internet.

In both of his new series — drawing from the natural sciences, astronomy, neurology, and art history — Ruff creates elaborate, open-ended visual systems that challenge viewer's perceptions, demonstrating that structures can become increasingly complex the more one contemplates the details.

The *cycles* series, grounded in mathematics and physics, shows computer screen-grab recordings of curves modeled in three dimensions. The views captured by the computer are produced as large-scale chromogenic prints, or are printed directly onto canvas. Inspired by 19th century science books, Ruff's *cycles* present abstract contours based on "cycloids," the mathematical curves obtained from rolling one curve along a second, fixed curve. Particularly interesting to Ruff was Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell's (1831-1879) treatise on electro-magnetism, accompanied by copperplate engravings of magnetic fields. Ruff found these delicate tracteries, while not intentionally aesthetic, suggestive of minimalist drawings. To explore their visual and spatial possibilities, Ruff used a three-dimensional rendering program to translate the algebraic formulae of the cycloids — regarded in mathematics as "the most aesthetic of curves" — into computer-generated imagery. The resulting virtual structures display the intricate linear filigree of cycloids as they would appear in space. The spiraling formations, always faithful to their mathematical origins, evoke a multitude of forms: the trajectories of planets, cascading ribbons, line drawings, or musical vibrations.

The works in the *cassini* series are based on photographic captures of Saturn taken by NASA's Cassini-Huygens Spacecraft, which launched in 2004 and completed its initial four-year mission in June 2008. The spacecraft orbited around Saturn to provide the first in-depth, close-up study of the planet and its domain, including its rings, moons, and magnetosphere, the enormous magnetic bubble that controls its planetary movement. Ruff acquired these black and white raw images from NASA's website, where they were broadcast directly from the spacecraft and made available for public download. Through computer manipulation, Ruff infused each gray-scale image with saturated color. The resulting chromogenic prints transform the originals into visual statements that both

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*cassini 24*, 2009. Chromogenic print.  
42 3/4 x 37 1/2 x 1 1/2 inches (108.5 x 95.5 x 4 cm)

capture the sweeping enormity of planetary structures while still distancing themselves from concrete forms, evocative instead of abstract and minimalist compositions.

**Thomas Ruff** (born 1958, Zell am Harmersbach, Germany) is known for his exploration of the mechanical production of images, and how technical mediation can influence a picture's expressiveness. His telescopic views of the night sky, *Sterne*, printed from pre-existing negatives; his provocative *nudes* borrowed from pornography websites; *Substrat*, his colorful manipulations of Japanese manga and anime; and his *jpegs* demonstrate Ruff's approach to reinventing existing images. Together with *cycles* and *cassini*, these serialized considerations draw attention to the abstraction that occurs when the visually explicit is re-imagined.

He was the subject of solo museum exhibitions at Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Museum für neue Kunst, Freiburg; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; Múcsarnok Kunsthalle, Budapest (all 2009); Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Sprengel Museum, Hanover (all 2007).

His work is held in the collections of many major museums, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; The Art Institute of Chicago; Essl Museum, Klosterneuberg; Dallas Museum of Art; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; National Museum of Photography, Copenhagen; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent; and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. He was the 2006 recipient of the Infinity Award for Art presented by the International Center of Photography, New York, and in 2009 Aperture published *jpegs*, a large-scale book dedicated exclusively to this monumental series. The artist lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany.

## Events

Thursday, February 11, 5:30 – 6 pm

Press preview

Thomas Ruff will give an informal walk-through of his exhibition at the gallery, prior to the public opening

For more information, contact Ben Thornborough, Press Officer

212-727-2070 or [BThornborough@davidzwirner.com](mailto:BThornborough@davidzwirner.com)

Friday, February 12, 6:30 pm

Special event

Thomas Ruff and Philip Gfelter in conversation, followed by a book signing for *jpegs*

Aperture Foundation, 547 West 27th Street, 4th floor, New York

Seated is limited for this free event, and RSVPs are required

212-505-5555 or [RSVP@aperture.org](mailto:RSVP@aperture.org) [www.aperture.org](http://www.aperture.org)

Saturday, February 13, 3 – 4:30 pm

Public talk

Thomas Ruff will give a lecture at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada

877-225-4246 or 416-979-6648 [www.ago.net](http://www.ago.net)