



JPEGS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS RUFF

Thomas Ruff is among the most important international photographers to emerge in the last fifteen years, and one of the most enigmatic and prolific of Bernd and Hilla Becher's former students, a group that includes Andreas Gursky, Thomas Struth, Candida Höfer, and Axel Hutte. In 2007, Ruff completed his monumental and very timely *Jpegs* series in which he explores the distribution and reception of images in the digital age. Starting with images he culls primarily from the Web, Ruff enlarges them to a gigantic scale, which exaggerates the pixel patterns, until they become sublime geometric displays of color. A fittingly deluxe and oversized volume, *Jpegs* (**Aperture, June 2009**) is the first monograph dedicated exclusively to the publication of Ruff's remarkable series.

When viewed up close the images in *Jpegs* look abstract; as you move away they merge into decipherable photographic images. Like Impressionistic paintings, Ruff's photographs require the viewer's active participation and shift in perspective in order to make a complete assessment of the image content. The work ranges from idyllic, seemingly untouched landscapes and popular tourist spots, to scenes of war and nature disturbed by human manipulation. Places and global events that have defined the visual media world of recent decades are represented, including the familiar, almost iconic pictures of atomic bomb tests; 9/11; scenes of warfare in Baghdad, Beirut, and Grozny; the killing fields of Cambodia; and the ravaged Asian coasts after the 2004 tsunami, among others. Taken together, these masterworks create an encyclopedic compendium of contemporary visual culture that also actively engages the history of landscape painting. *Jpegs* is a testament to the effects of the digital age on the medium of photography.



THOMAS RUFF (born in Zell am Harmersbach, Germany, 1958) has exhibited in galleries and museums throughout Europe, Asia, and North America, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; and Kunst-Werke, Berlin. He is the 2006 recipient of the International Center of Photography's Infinity Award.

BENNETT SIMPSON (essay) is associate curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and a widely published critic. He recently curated exhibitions of the work of Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Roe Ethridge, Dan Graham, and Lisa Lipinski.

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Aperture—located in New York's Chelsea art district—is a world-renowned non-profit publisher and exhibition space dedicated to promoting photography in all its forms. Aperture was founded in 1952 by photographers Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, Barbara Morgan, and Minor White; historian Beaumont Newhall; and writer/curator Nancy Newhall, among others. These visionaries created a new quarterly periodical, *Aperture* magazine, to foster both the development and the appreciation of the photographic medium and its practitioners. In the 1960s, Aperture expanded to include the publication of books (over five hundred to date) that comprise one of the most comprehensive and innovative libraries in the history of photography and art. Aperture's programs now include artist lectures and panel discussions, limited-edition photographs, and traveling exhibitions that show at major museums and arts institutions in the U.S. and internationally.

Contact: Andrea Smith, Director of Communications, (212) 946-7111, asmith@aperture.org
Christina Caputo, Publicist, (212) 946-7123, ccaputo@aperture.org