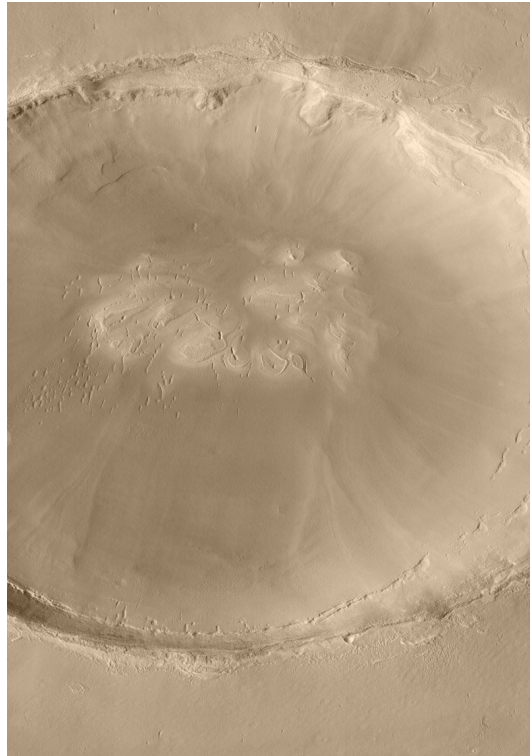


Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle

Thomas Ruff: ma.r.s.

September 15 – November 03, 2012

Opening: Friday, September 14, 2012, 6-9 p.m.



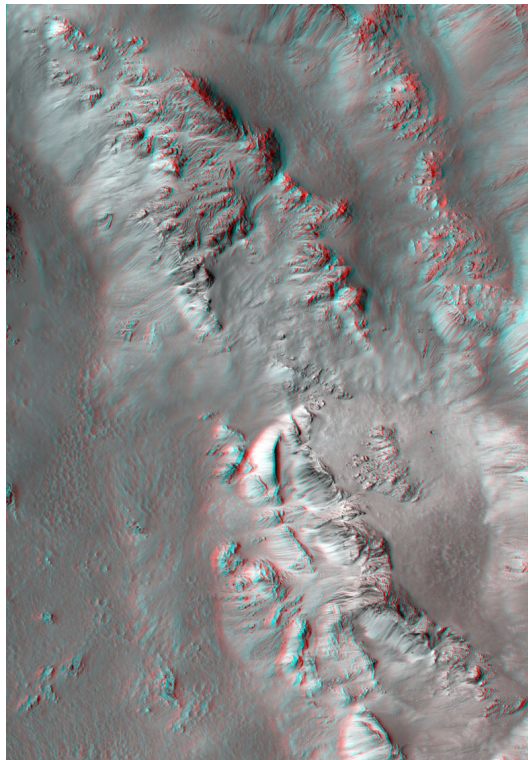
Thomas Ruff. ma.r.s 08_I, 2012

Thomas Ruff has been exhibiting at the Rüdiger Schöttle Gallery for the past three decades. Following a comprehensive showing of his work at the Haus der Kunst in Munich, we are now pleased to announce our forthcoming presentation of new works from Thomas Ruff's *ma.r.s series*. Thomas Ruff, born in the Black Forest town of Zell am Harmersbach in 1958, counts among the world's best known and most successful artist photographers. Since the 1980s, after completing his studies at the Düsseldorf Art Academy under Bernd and Hilla Becher, Thomas Ruff has been devoting himself to vastly differing groups of themes. While in the beginning his photographic works typically consisted of series of purely objective, impartial depictions, such as portraits, buildings, interiors, his work has in the course of time become more and more concerned with the medium of photography itself and, by the same token, distanced itself more and more from the classical themes of photography. Since the late 1990s, Thomas Ruff has been increasingly preoccupied with the new possibilities afforded by digital photography, not least with the technical manipulability of images disseminated through the worldwide mass medium of the Internet with its inexhaustible source of material. Motivated by his fascination with astronomy from a very early age, Ruff created a series entitled "Sterne" ("Stars") between the years of 1989 and 1992, a series that gradually led to the idea of basing his work not on his own photographs but on those of a specialized archive of astronomical photography. His blown-up images draw the viewer into a seemingly motionless reality, while in actual reality the universe is in a constant state of spatiotemporal motion and change. Indeed, the artist shows us that what we consider to be real according to our customary way of seeing things does in fact stem from our imagination and is merely suggested by the photographic medium. Thomas Ruff draws his starting material from the comprehensive and publicly accessible NASA archive: images taken by NASA's space probe *Cassini*, which orbits the planet Saturn and lends its name to the series begun by Thomas Ruff in 2008. Making skilful use of colouring techniques, Thomas Ruff strengthens what he already considers to be a high degree of abstraction and

emphasizes the colours and geometrical forms – such as spheres and circles – that naturally characterize Saturn and her rings and moons. In so doing, he transforms the original black-and-white images, which had been photomechanically reproduced for purely scientific purposes, into images of a personal, painterly, purely imaginative kind.

Thomas Ruff's most recent series, *ma.r.s*, which he began in 2010, is based on a similar principle. The basic starting material likewise comprises NASA images, this time taken by the space probe Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter. Our red neighbour planet Mars, which is approximately half the size of planet Earth, likewise features polar ice caps and changing seasons. The extremely sharp black-and-white images show us not unfamiliar landscapes: dried-out riverbeds, mountain ridges and craters. From this vast archive of soberly scientific material, of which he has viewed only a small fraction, Thomas Ruff selects those images that fascinate him aesthetically or subjectively and then processes them in order to give them depth and colour. Images taken by the space probe from a vertical angle are perspectively distorted into oblique views, creating the impression that the space probe is about to land on the planet like an aeroplane on a landing strip. The colouring of the black-and-white originals heightens this psychological effect on our perception and makes for a realistic view of the still pristine landscape, a landscape that some future visitor to Mars might see spread out before him as he fastens his seatbelt for the final approach.

A new aspect of the *ma.r.s* series are Thomas Ruff's experiments with the three-dimensional reproduction of images, a technique so far used primarily by the film industry in our age of High Definition and the Multiplex Cinema as a means of heightening optical illusion to its very limits. With the aid of a special pair of spectacles, the depth of the image becomes visible: mountains seem to loom towards the viewer; ravines open up like jaws; our impression of a visit to Mars becomes all the more real as the illusion, to which we are subjected, becomes more and more convincing. But even without special spectacles, these at once intensively and diffusedly coloured works by Thomas Ruff cannot fail to fascinate us, for they openly invite us to explore their optical possibilities and effects in all their permutations.



Thomas Ruff, 3D *ma.r.s* 04, 2012