MAI 36 GALERIE

THOMAS RUFF

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March 31 – May 27 2023
Artist Reception: March 30, 6 pm

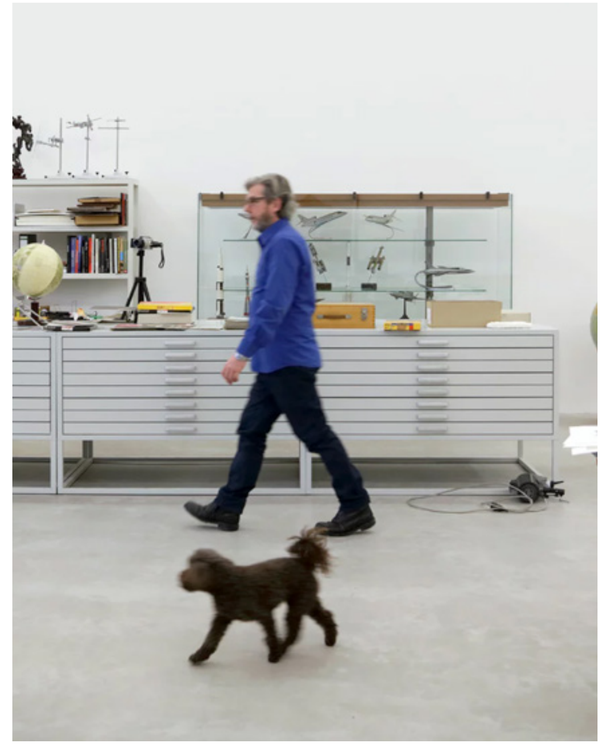
Thomas Ruff
d.o.pe.

Since the late 1970s, Thomas Ruff has been investigating the internal rules and structures of the medium of photography throughout various series. In doing so, he is equally interested in both the various genres of photography and the different photographic techniques. He analyzes the photographic genres, which include portraits, landscape, architecture, astronomy, press photos, nudes, or abstraction, for their visual meaning and expressiveness. In doing so, he uses all photographic techniques and methods known to him - analog and digital photographs, images created on the computer, as well as found photographs from books, magazines, newspapers, scientific or private archives, and images circulating on the Internet.

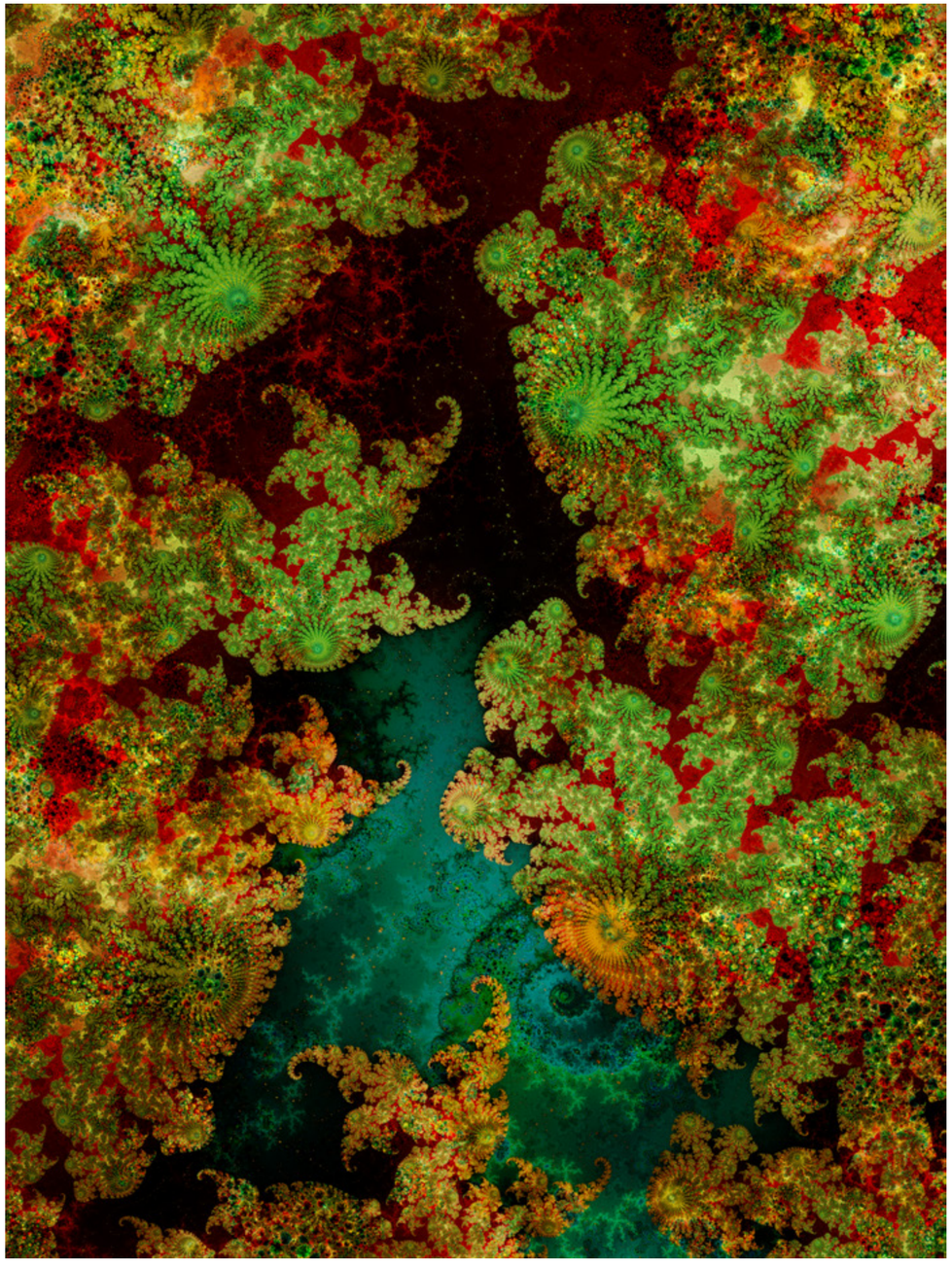
In his exhibition at Mai 36 Galerie, Thomas Ruff presents his latest series d.o.pe. for the first time in Switzerland, exploring the visual appearance of geometric structures, for which the mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot introduced the term 'fractal' in 1975. These are 'naturally' appearing objects, structures or patterns that exhibit a high degree of self-similarity, so that when a section of the pattern is enlarged, the same structure can be seen again and again. Using fractal software, he created a wide variety of images of sections of the so-called Mandelbrot set, which he then superimposed to create psychedelic pseudo-imitations of nature. He has the finished motif printed on velour rugs, to be hung on the wall as 'tapestries', suggesting a seemingly spatial depth and a soft nature-like surface. With this series, Ruff succeeds, on the one hand, in making visible the visual beauty of mathematics, which becomes apparent when immersed in the fractal world, and, on the other hand, in generating images that appear natural but are completely artificially produced.

With the d.o.pe. series, Ruff once again delves into the world of mathematics after the zycles, exploring the visual beauty of complex mathematical formulas and algorithms. If the zycles are visualizations of formulas from the field of linear algebra, the fractal patterns underlying d.o.pe. are extensions of Euclidean geometry. The self-similar structures of fractals occur in simplified form in nature, for example the structure of a snowflake, but they can also be created as a digital image in virtual space in both two and three dimensions. The link, that fractals are both natural and artificial structures at the same time, was confirmed by the artist in his ongoing investigation of human perception. What is reality? The world that is in front of the eye or a constructed, virtual reality. And what if real reality and constructed fiction become indistinguishable?

Over the last 35 years, Thomas Ruff has exhibited in galleries and major museums worldwide, most recently at the MAMC, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain in Saint-Étienne. The close collaboration with Mai 36 Galerie, which regularly exhibits new works by the artist, dates back to 1988.



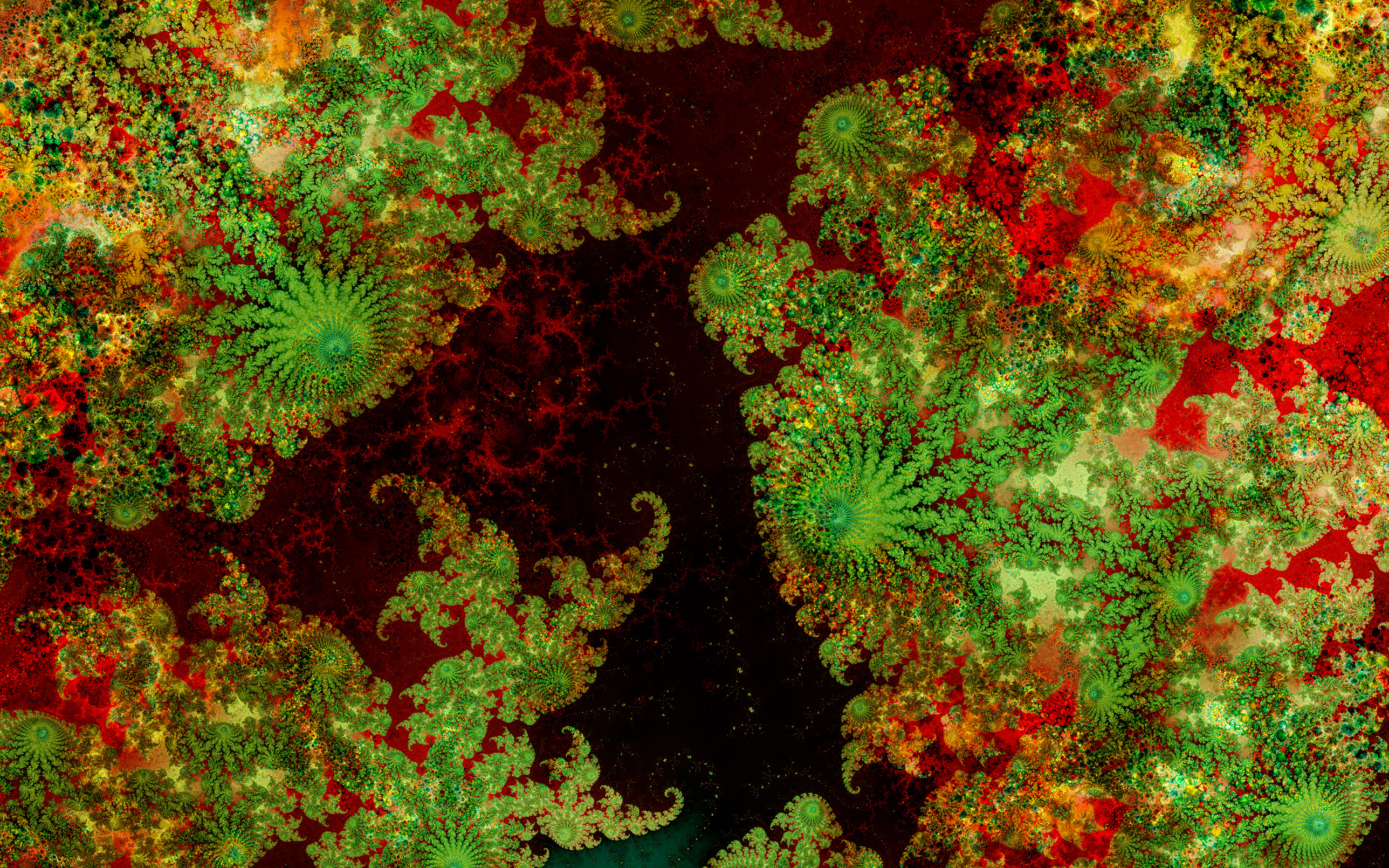
Thomas Ruff, 2006
in New York, Photo: Frank Sun

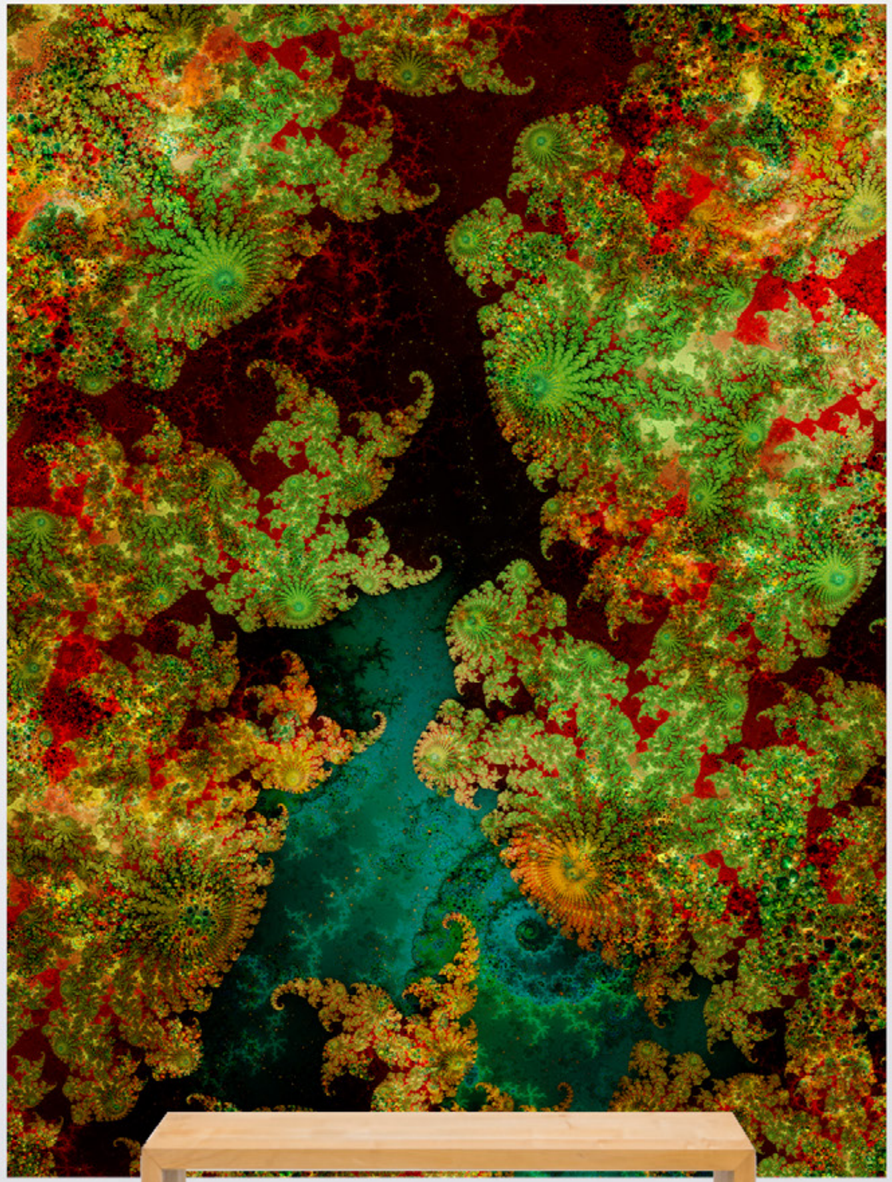


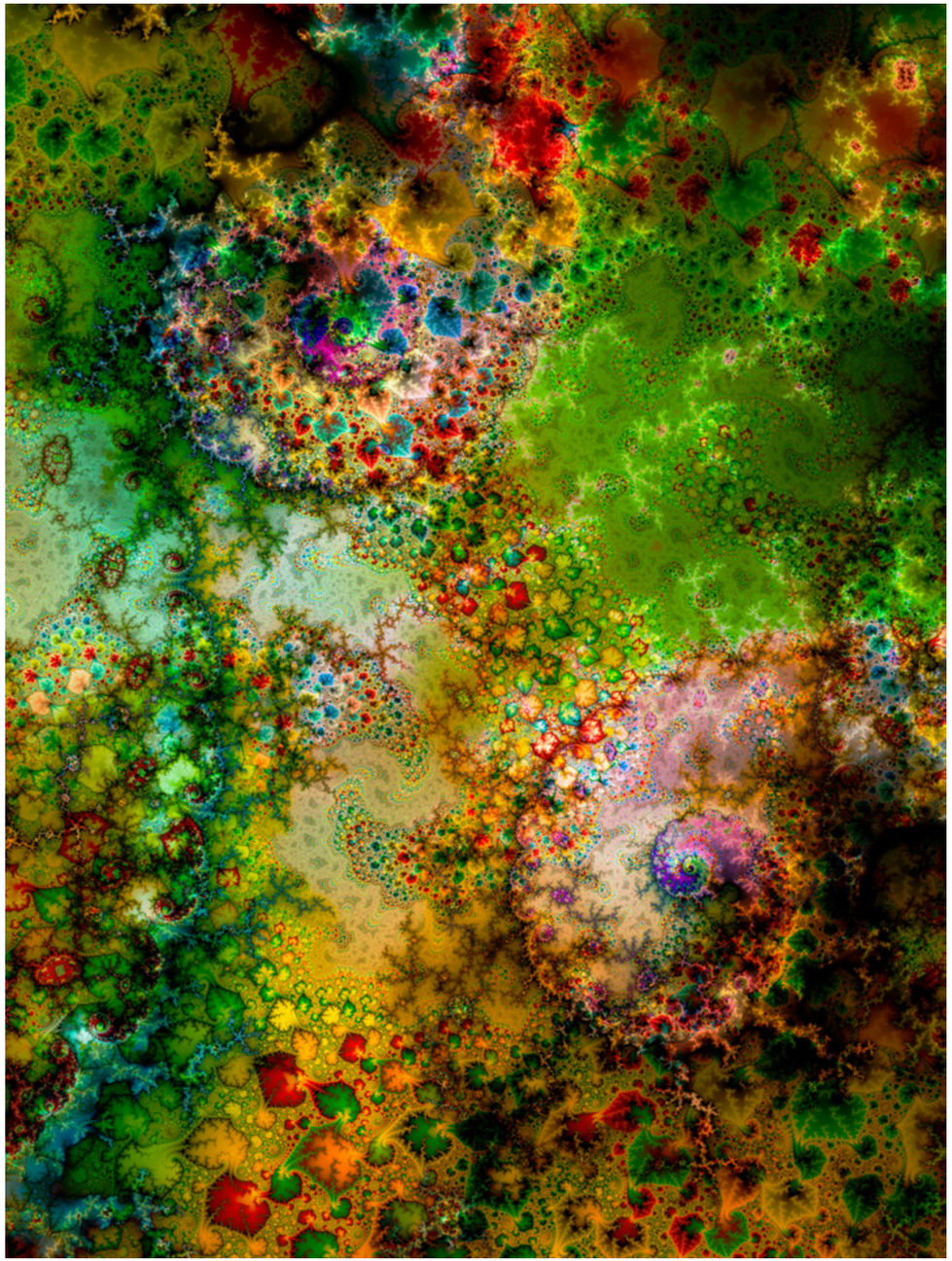
THOMAS RUFF

d.o.pe.06, 2022
colaris print on velour carpet
267 x 200 cm (105 1/8 x 78 3/4 in.)
edition of 4, ed 2/4 + 1 AP

THR.21312.P



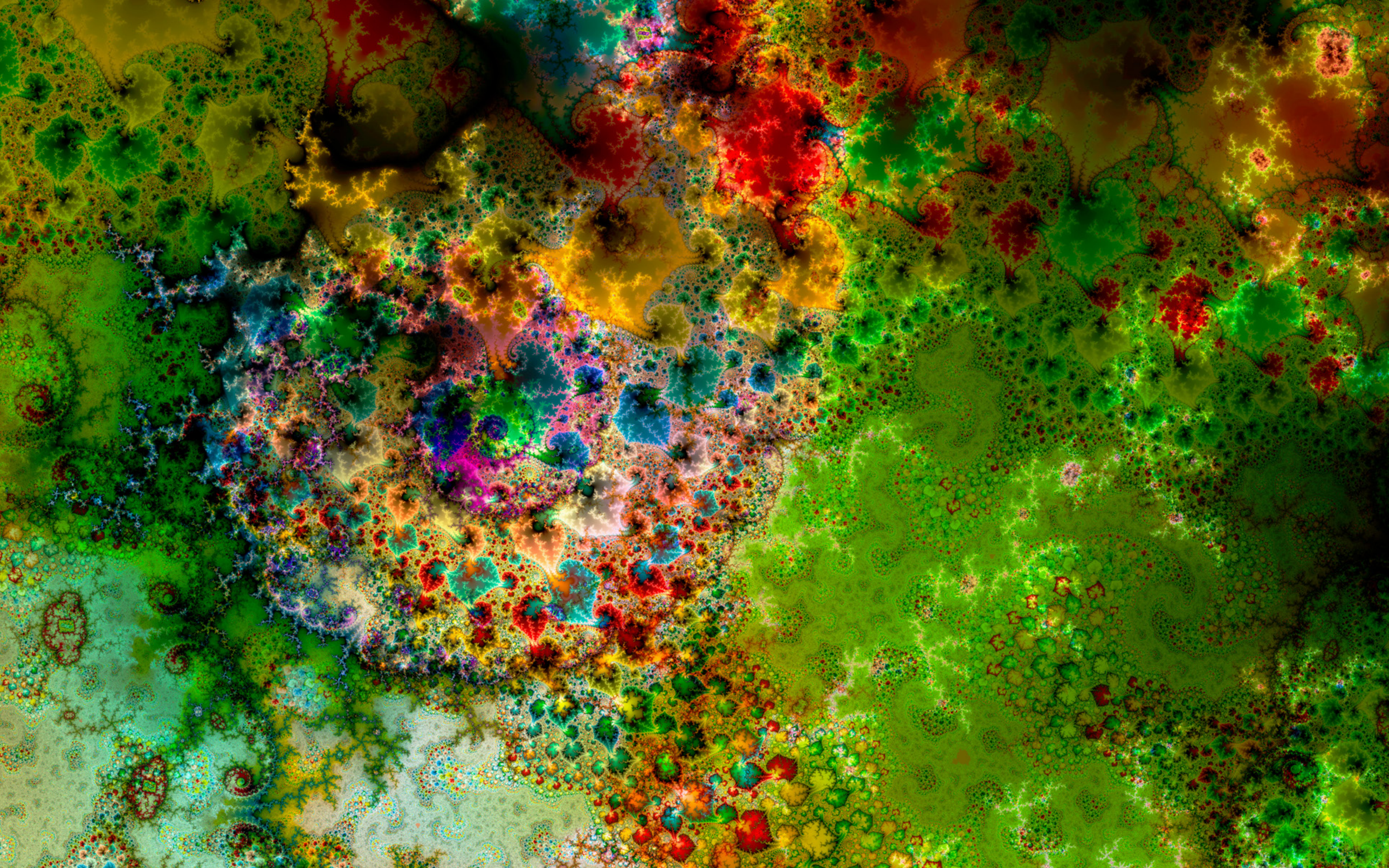


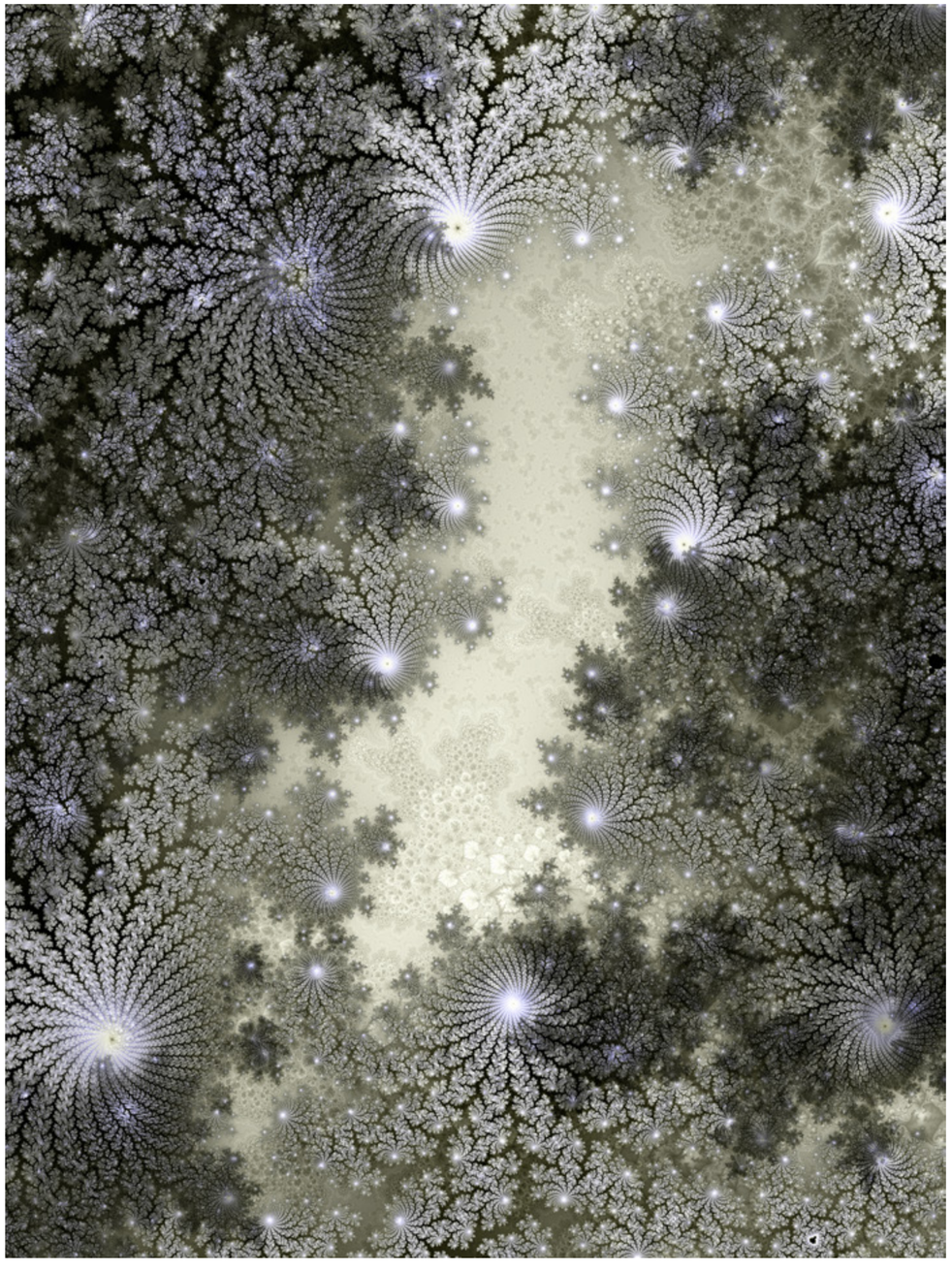


THOMAS RUFF

d.o.pe. 03 III, 2022
colaris print on velour carpet
267 x 200 cm (105 1/8 x 78 3/4 in.)
ed. 1/4, edition of 4 + 1 AP

THR.21317.P

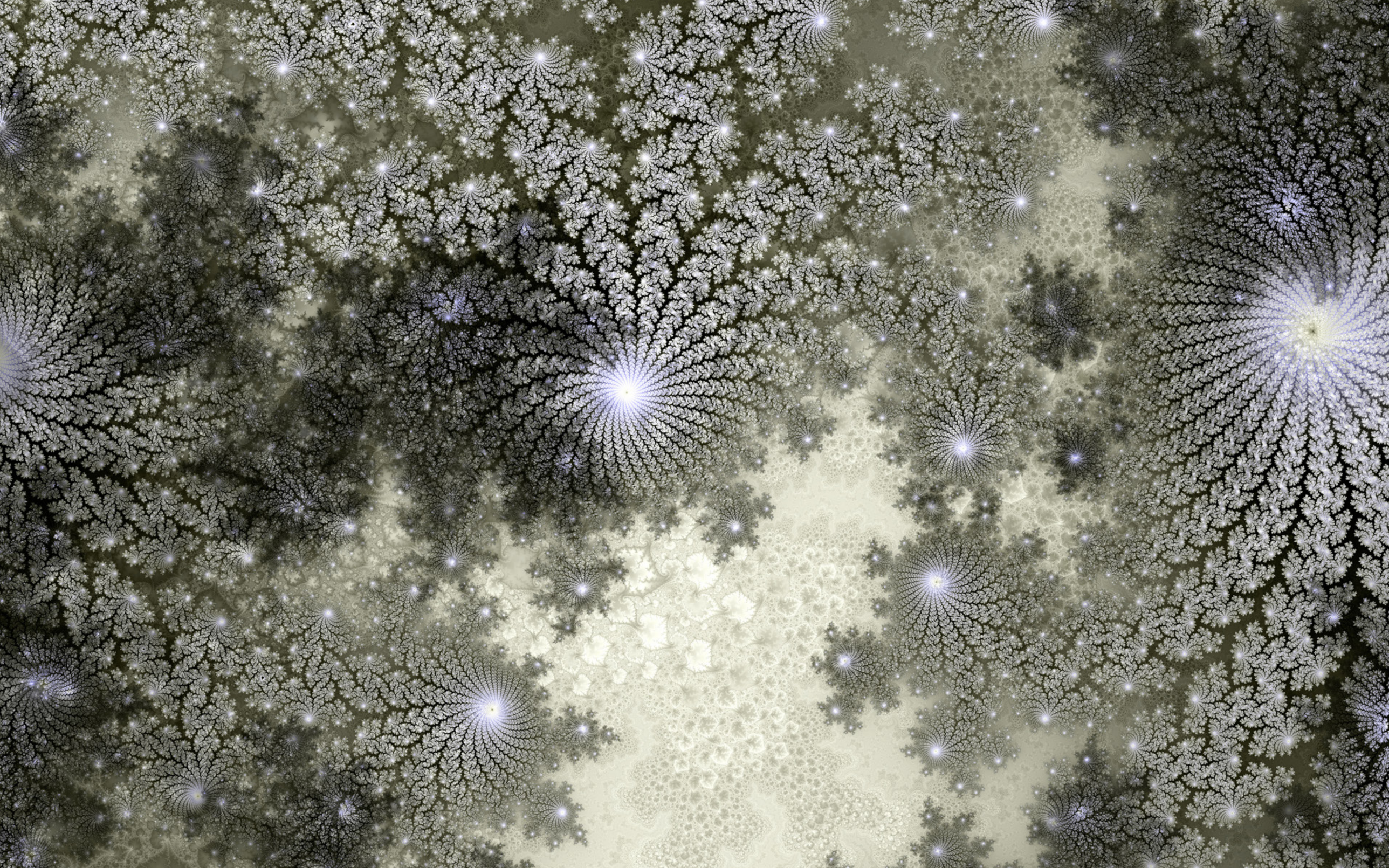




THOMAS RUFF

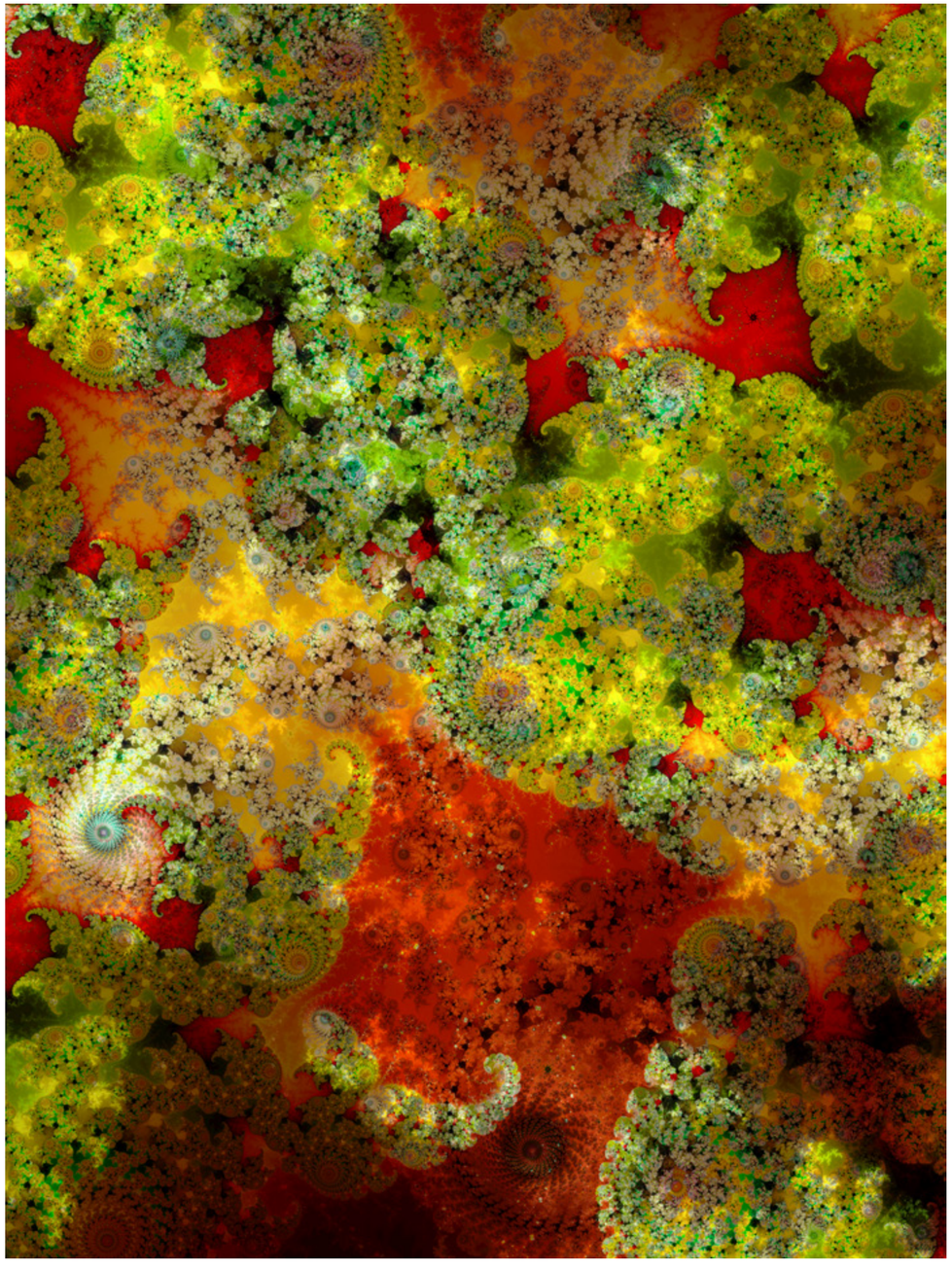
d.o.pe.07 I, 2022
colaris print on velour carpet
267 x 200 cm (105 1/8 x 78 3/4 in.)
edition of 4

THR.21343.P



"The images I create are simultaneously organic and nonorganic. They remind you of things you might have seen in nature, but at the same time they seem to be unfamiliar and unworldly. And even though the imagery appears to be natural, they are images – created with a software on a computer printed out by a machine. With those images I am able to combine traditional image making with computational technology and subtly give shape to the world that is about to be."

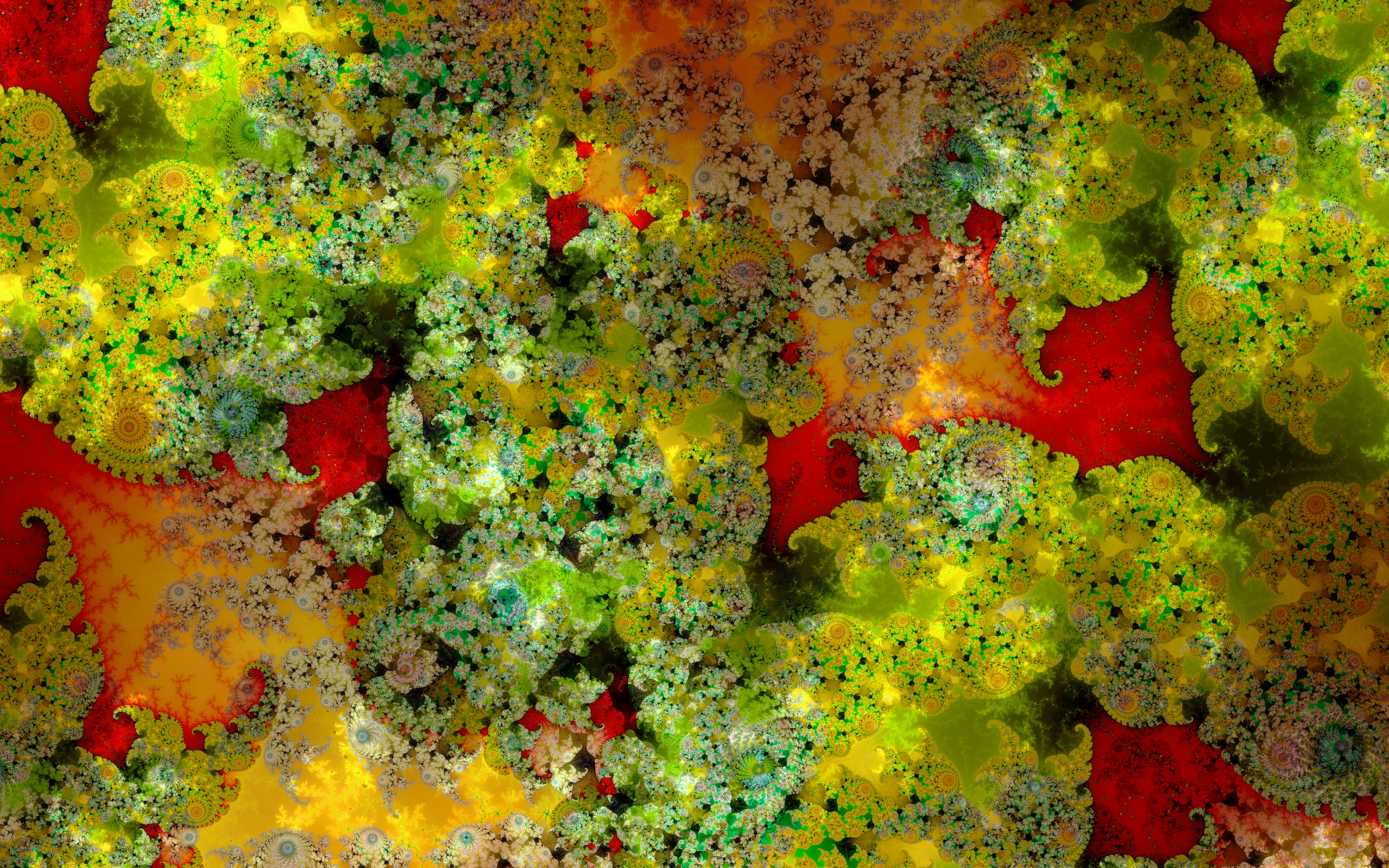
– *Thomas Ruff*

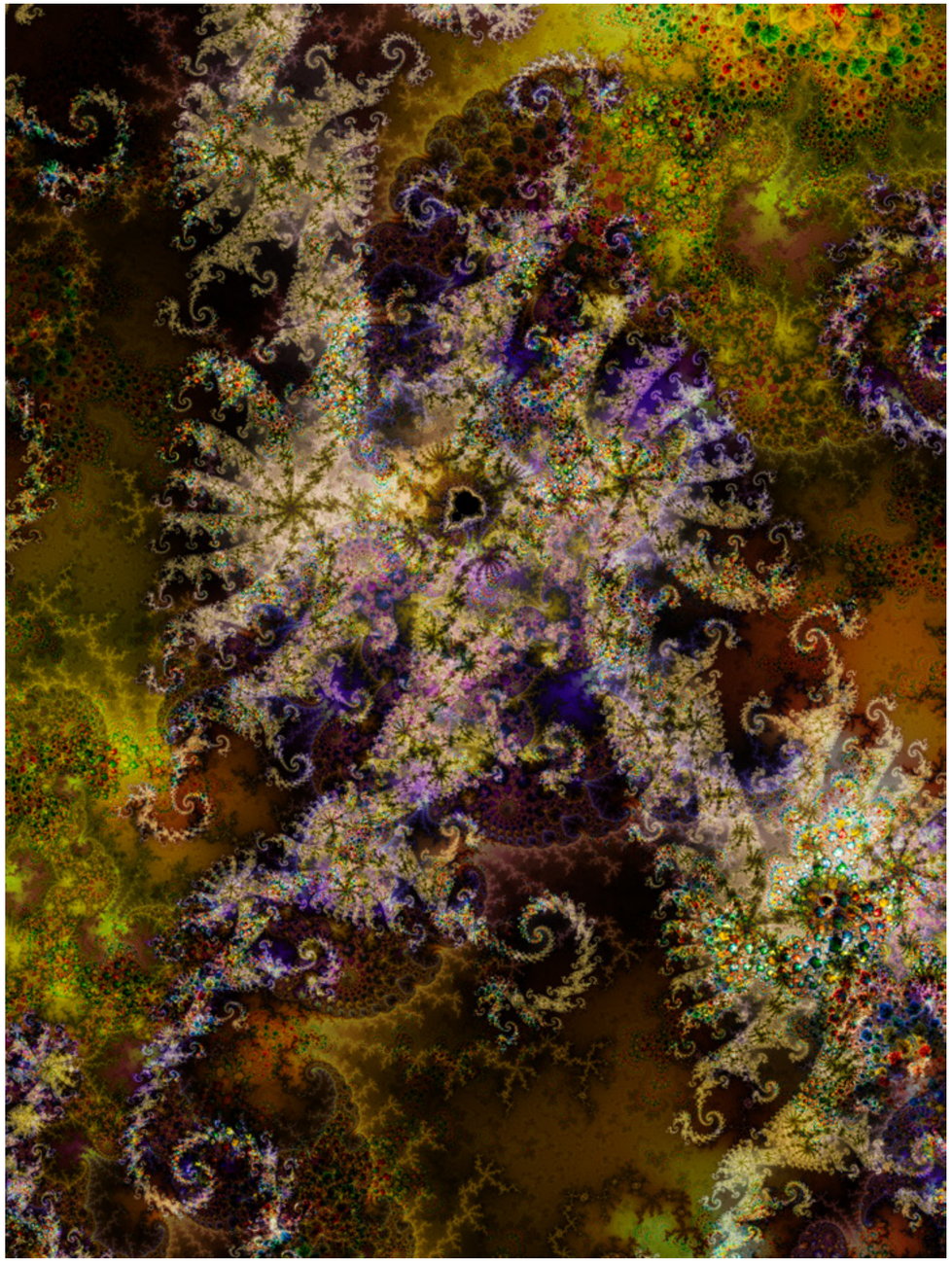


THOMAS RUFF

d.o.pe.06 II, 2022
colaris print on velour carpet
267 x 200 cm (105 1/8 x 78 3/4 in.)
edition of 4, ed 3/4 + 1 AP

THR.21344.P

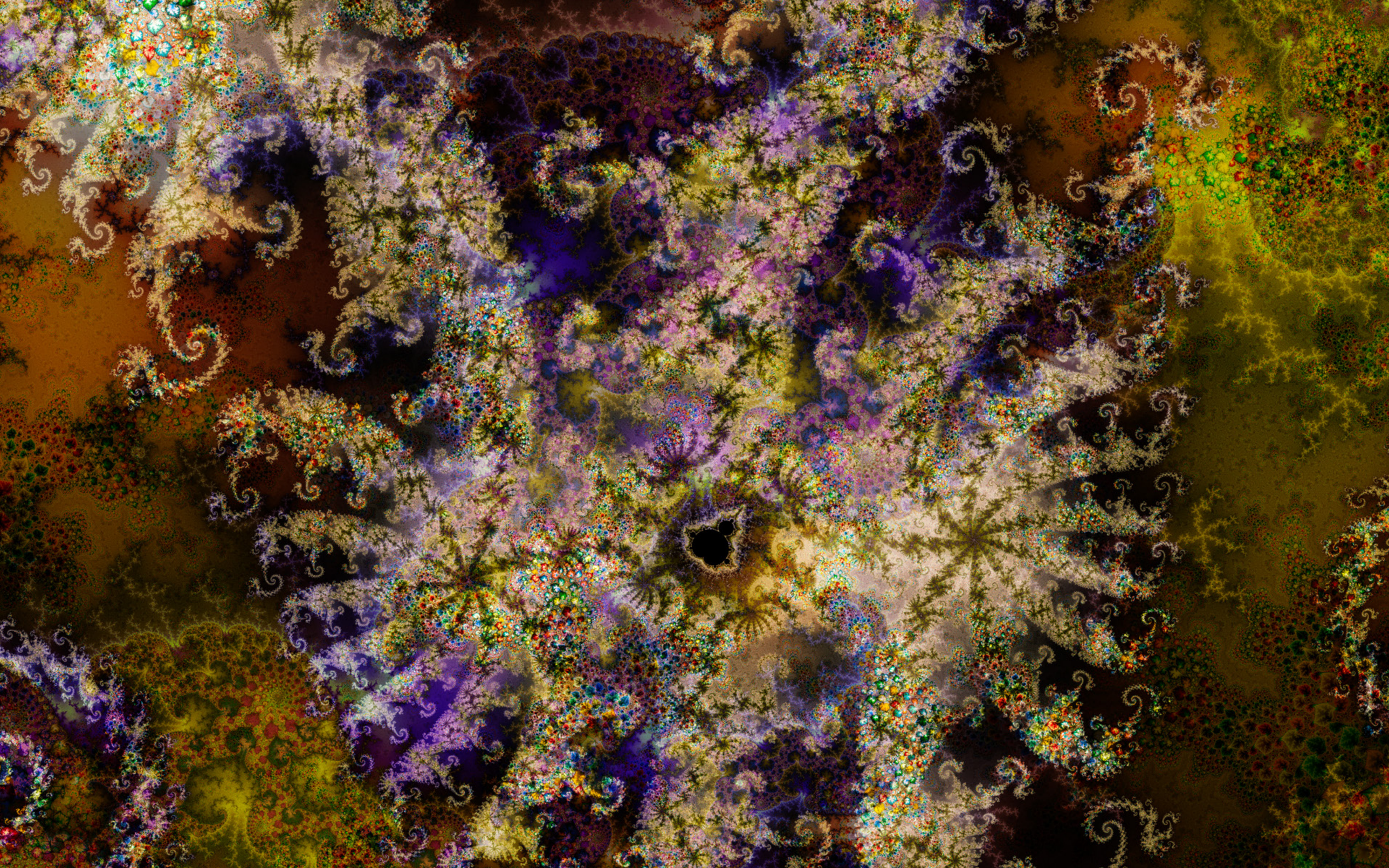




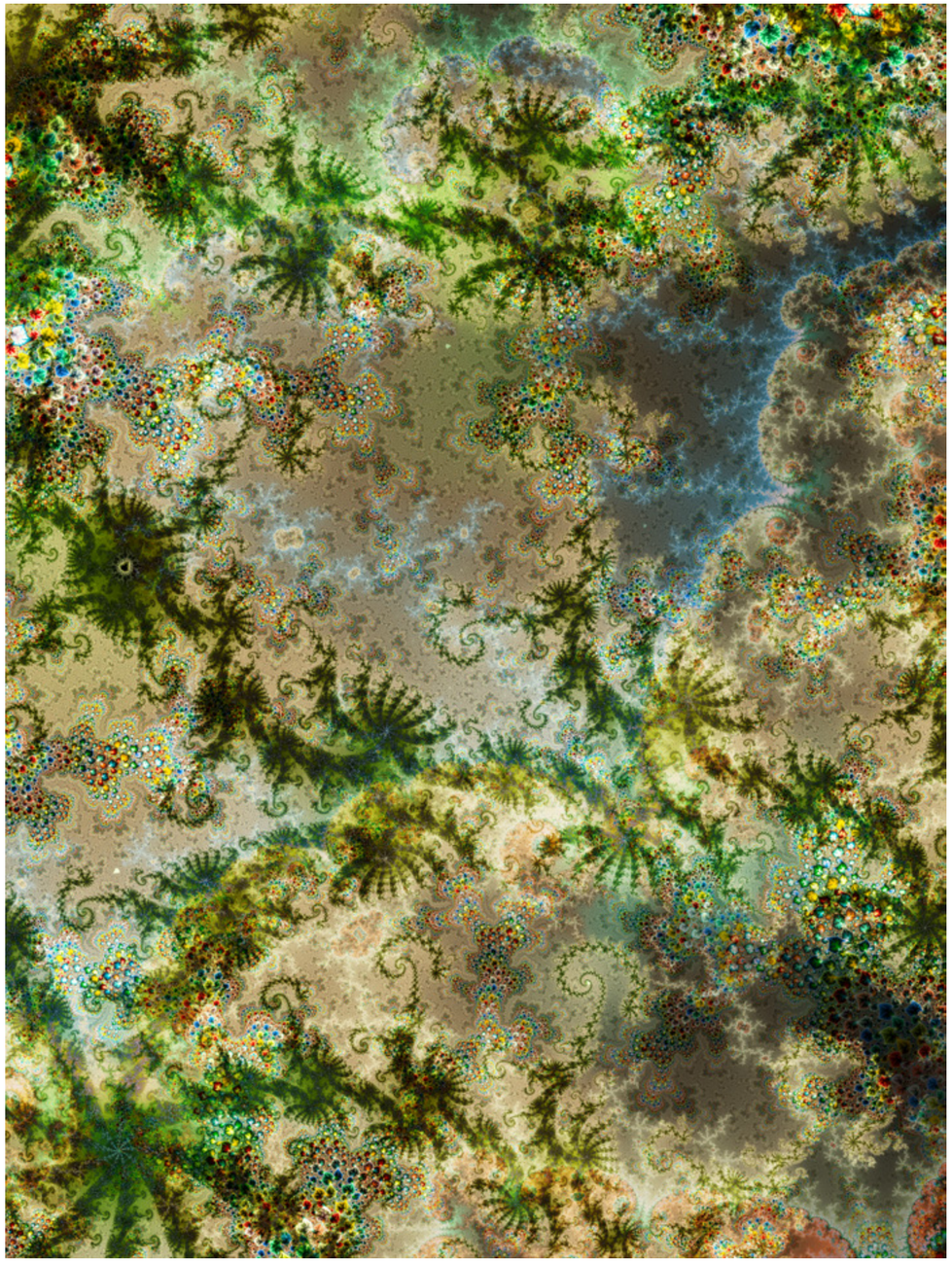
THOMAS RUFF

d.o.pe.09 I, 2022
colaris print on velour carpet
267 x 200 cm (105 1/8 x 78 3/4 in.)
edition of 4, ed 3/4 + 1 AP

THR.21345.P



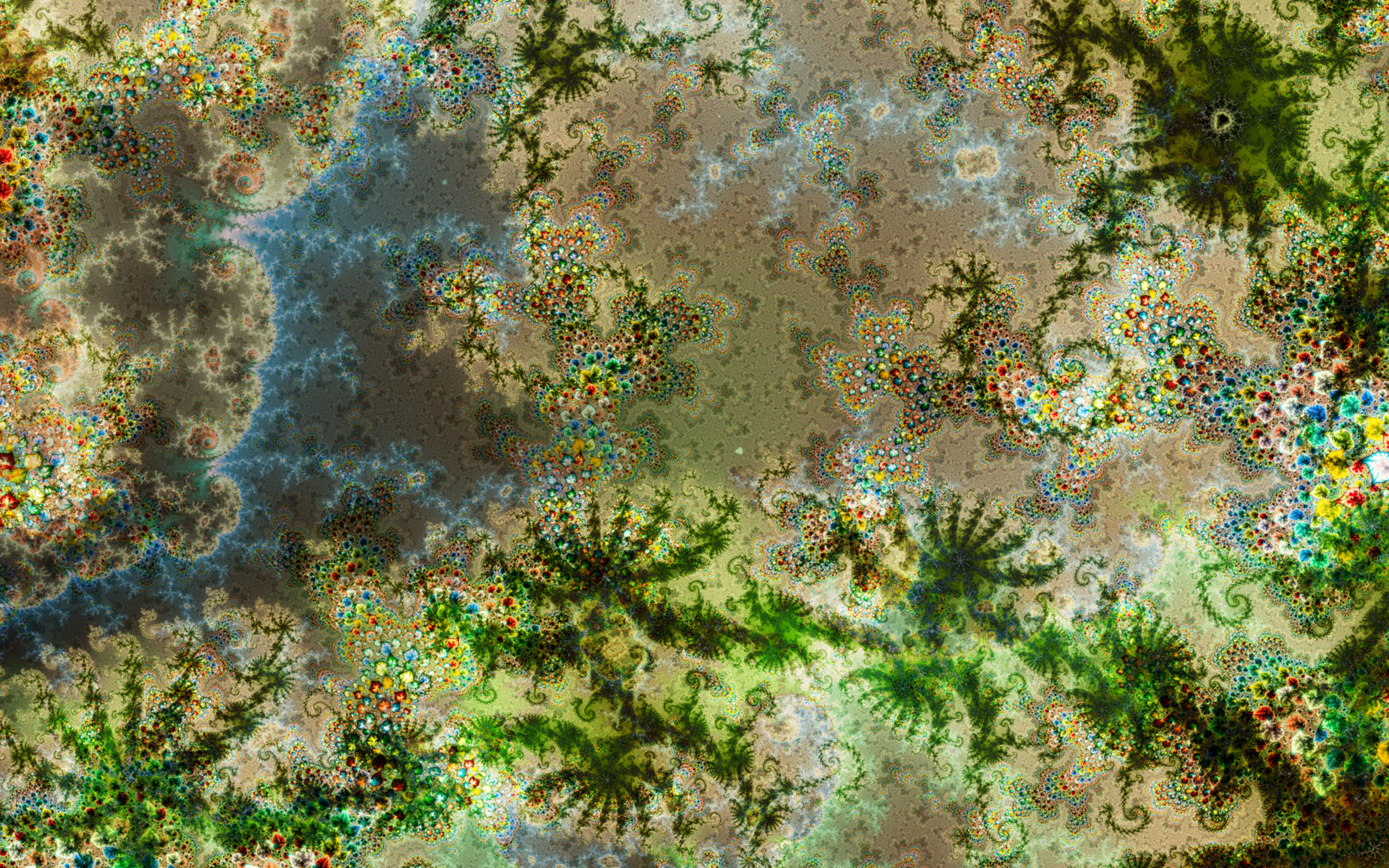
Installation view, Thomas Ruff: d.o.pe., David Zwirner, New York, 2022



THOMAS RUFF

d.o.pe.09 II, 2022
colaris print on velour carpet
267 x 200 cm (105 1/8 x 78 3/4 in.)
edition of 4, ed 3/4 + 1 AP

THR.21346.P



Thomas Ruff
neg◊laviniaschulz (from the series of Negative)

Additionally, Thomas Ruff is showing for the first time the neg◊lavinia-schulz subgroup from the series of Negative - expressionist dance studies of the dancer Lavinia Schulz and the actor Walter Holdt in full-body masks, which they both designed together in the early 1920s.
The starting point of the series are photographs of the 19th and 20th century, which have a typical brown patina and whose motifs cover the entire range of historical photography. When these photographs are inverted (reversing the positive into the negative), a high-contrast blue tone emerges, and the compositional design comes to the fore. Thus, the negative, the actual 'original' of a photograph, which threatens to disappear completely due to the triumph of digital photography, becomes the object of contemplation.

THOMAS RUFF

neg◊laviniaschulz_16, 2021
c-print
image: 30 x 22 cm (11 3/4 x 8 5/8 in.)
framed: 71 x 61 cm (28 x 24 in.)
edition of 8 + 3 AP, ed 1/8

THR.21340.P

THOMAS RUFF

neg◊laviniaschulz_06, 2021
c-print
image: 30 x 22 cm (11 3/4 x 8 5/8 in.)
framed: 71 x 61 cm (28 x 24 in.)
edition of 8 + 3 AP, ed 1/8

THR.21330.P

THOMAS RUFF

neg◊laviniaschulz_10, 2021
c-print
image: 30 x 22 cm (11 3/4 x 8 5/8 in.)
framed: 71 x 61 cm (28 x 24 in.)
edition of 8 + 3 AP, ed 1/8

THR.21334.P

THOMAS RUFF

neg◊laviniaschulz_14, 2021
c-print
image: 30 x 22 cm (11 3/4 x 8 5/8 in.)
framed: 71 x 61 cm (28 x 24 in.)
edition of 8 + 3 AP, ed 1/8

THR.21338.P

THOMAS RUFF

neg◊laviniaschulz_13, 2021
c-print
image: 30 x 22 cm (11 3/4 x 8 5/8 in.)
framed: 71 x 61 cm (28 x 24 in.)
edition of 8 + 3 AP, ed 1/8

THR.21337.P

THOMAS RUFF

neg◊laviniaschulz_07, 2021
c-print
image: 30 x 22 cm (11 3/4 x 8 5/8 in.)
framed: 71 x 61 cm (28 x 24 in.)
edition of 8 + 3 AP, ed 1/8

THR.21331.P

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