

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

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