

THOMAS RUFF PRATO 16.10-11.12/2010, a project curated by Pier Luigi Tazzi opens on Saturday 16 October. Welcomed with enthusiasm by the Alderman of Culture of the Province of Prato, the writer Edoardo Nesi, THOMAS RUFF PRATO 16.10-11.12/2010 is the continuation of a project that began in 2002 with Spread in Prato: to bring art into the spaces of everyday life, consumption and production, into the fabric of the city, both in the center and in the suburbs.

This time the project becomes more precise: to bring art back into the spaces of power and the society; to return to a venerable European tradition in which art was seen above all in places of power like churches and public institutions. Interrupted toward the end of the 1700s – when art lost its contact with the life of the society and was relegated to dedicated spaces, collections and museums – this tradition is now updated in the new curatorial project of Pier Luigi Tazzi.

The works selected for the exhibition THOMAS RUFF PRATO 16.10-11.12/2010 come from the artist's entire oeuvre and are suited to different environments that will contain them. In Prato, Palazzo Buonamici, now the headquarters of the Provincia, and the former Cimatoria Campolmi that now contains the Lazzerini Municipal Library and Cultural Documentation Institute; in Montemurlo, Villa Giamari, also the home of the local Municipal Library and in Carmignano in the Spazio d'arte Alberto Moretti/Schema Polis.

The subjects of the works of the German artist featured in this event start with the first, innovative Portraits of classmates at the academy, in large formats, that made Thomas Ruff famous all over the world, and also extend to other fields of investigation. These include digital photography, with the cycle of Nudes (1999-2002), low-definition pornographic images taken from the Internet, in which the artist intervenes by changing the colors or removing certain details. The Substrat series (2001-2004), based on abstractions of digitally reworked manga images, through which Ruff stimulates the gaze of the viewer, encouraging an approach to a subject that changes according to the distance from which it is observed. Subjected to an overlaying procedure, the images are transformed into abstract compositions of great complexity. The exhibition also includes works from the jpegs series, begun in 2004, where the enlargement of the digital images reveals its pixel structure, altering mechanisms of perception.

Thomas Ruff's path of experimentation with the multiple linguistic possibilities of photography is also illustrated in this exhibition through astronomical photographs, Sterne (1989-1992), negatives supplied by the ESO (European Southern Observatory) that the artist develops in very large prints, confronting the viewer with constellations that are lost in the abstraction of an ideal firmament. Finally, in more recent works the imagery is connected with physical and mathematical phenomena,

as in the cassini series based on photographs of Saturn taken by NASA.

The works of Thomas Ruff will be shown in the facility spaces and offices of Palazzo Buonamici. Alongside the allegorical frescos that reflect the former status of the building, visitors will see images from our contemporary world, created through the medium of photography. Photography is a direct, immediate means of representation, easy and accessible, not requiring particular tools of interpretation, so it is capable of reaching a wide, varied audience. Due to these specific traits, it is the genre best suited to the purposes of the project. Initially utilized as a support element for the documentation of painting, photography did not gain full status as an artistic medium until the mid-1980s. Thanks to artists like Thomas Ruff, Candida Höfer, Axel Hütte, Thomas Struth and Andreas Gursky, who all trained at the Academy of Düsseldorf with Bernd and Hilla Becher, but also to others of the same generation like Jan Vercruyse, Günther Förg, Rodney Graham, Jean Marc Bustamante, photography has become an essential tool in the development and construction of artworks, on a par with more traditional media like painting and sculpture, beyond its specific stylistic and disciplinary characteristics.

Photography is also the memory and proof of reality. Pier Luigi Tazzi positions the photographic works of Thomas Ruff in physical spaces set aside for conservation, memory, archives: the library of Montemurlo, in the 18th-century Villa Giamari, and the Lazzerini, a library and now also a documentation center and museum of the city of Prato, located in the former Cimatoria Campolmi. This is a large architectural complex built inside the medieval walls of the city. Here, the works of the artist establish a dialogue with the industrial archaeology of the building, an emblem of the entrepreneurial spirit of the city of Prato that emerged, as in other European cities, after the Industrial Revolution. At Carmignano, in the Spazio d'arte Alberto Moretti/Schema Polis, devoted to the study and promotion of certain significant art experiences from the postwar period to the present, starting with the work of Alberto Moretti and the activities of Galleria Schema he directed in Florence from 1972 to 1994.

The exhibition itinerary concludes in the space of Dryphoto arte contemporanea, with a selection of published materials on Thomas Ruff: books, catalogues, editions.

THOMAS RUFF PRATO 16.10-11.12/2010 will be accompanied by a publication. The book, with texts by Pier Luigi Tazzi, and others, and photographic documentation of the exhibition, will be presented on Thursday 4 December at the Biblioteca Lazzerini in Prato.

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