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EXHIBITION: **THOMAS RUFF – *NEW WORK***

DATES: **May 22 – June 21, 2003**

Opening on Thursday, May 22, the gallery will present new work by German artist Thomas Ruff. This will be the artist's third solo exhibition at the gallery. A large retrospective of Ruff's work has been touring major museums in Europe since February 2002. It is currently on view at Tate Liverpool through July 6, 2003. Ruff's recent *nudes* series is the subject of a monograph published this month by Abrams, with text by Michel Houellebecq.

Best known for his oversized, deadpan portraits, his unmediated shots of commonplace interiors, and his seemingly straightforward photographs of architecture, Ruff has quietly approached many familiar genres, and proceeded to discreetly reinvent them. Ruff has an uncanny feel for the look of the ordinary – in people, places, and objects. However, his brand of photographic objectivity is not that purportedly practiced by photojournalists. Rather, it is elicited by scanning the mundane for the telling particulars of aggregated detail, and by a reserved and skeptical curiosity towards photography's ultimate truthfulness.

In this exhibition, the artist will premier two new bodies of work: the *Substrats* and the *Machines*. The *Substrat* series is a logical extension of the *nudes* series. With the *nudes*, Ruff appropriated existing imagery from pornographic sites off the Internet and then proceeded to enlarge, distort and transform them. The *Substrats* are again taken from the Internet, this time using Japanese manga and anime cartoons. However, he alters and manipulates the source material such that the work becomes an abstraction of forms and colors with no visual memory of the original source material. The resulting images are wondrous, undulating abstract fields. Thus, after the *nudes*, Ruff tackles yet another genre, one certainly not at the heart of photography: abstraction.

The *Machines* are images derived from vintage, large-format glass negatives depicting industrial machines. These photographs, shot in the 1930s and 40s, were the basis for line drawings in product catalogs. Since the machines themselves were too heavy to be moved into a studio, the commercial photographers at the time positioned people behind the machines, who held up large white sheets to block out the background. However, the exposure time was so long, that the assistants holding the sheets would invariably move, thus creating an image where the rigidity of the machine stands in stark contrast to its almost ghost-like surrounding. After exploiting the sheer unlimited possibilities of computer editing in digital photography in his *nudes* and *Substrats* series, Ruff now investigates an early, almost naive, form of photographic manipulation. Ruff's resulting photographs, printed in muted tones adding color only to the machines, evoke a sense of dignity and beauty, while heightening an awareness of representation's own manipulative promises and illusions. They also create a dialogue with one of Modernism's most important and lasting movements: Surrealism.

For further information, please contact the gallery at 212 727 2070.