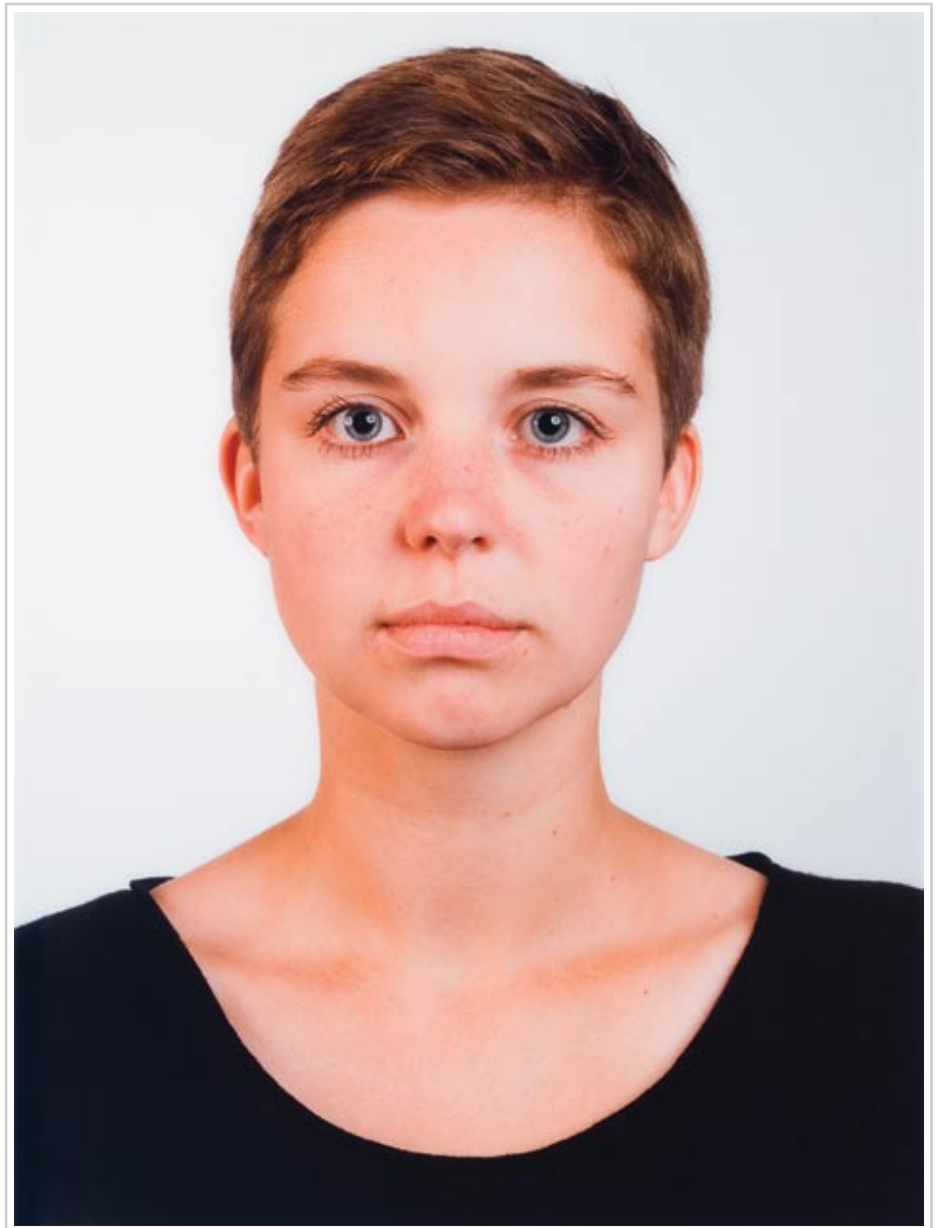


Thomas Ruff

Portrait (Isabelle Graw), 1988

chromogenic color print
211.0 cm x 165.0 cm x 4.0 cm

Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 88.51.1



Thomas Ruff

Portrait (Isabelle Graw), 1988



Image source: *XL Photography*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2000.

Artist's Biography

Nationality: German

Born: 1958, Zell am Harmersbach, Germany

Thomas Ruff was born in Zell am Harmersbach, Germany, in 1958. He studied at Staatliche Kunstakademie, Dusseldorf under Bernd Becher from 1977 to 1985. His work has been featured in exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, among others. He has participated in international exhibitions such as the Sao Paulo Bienal in 2002. He lives and works in Dusseldorf, Germany.

Ruff scrutinizes a range of photographic genres—architectural photography, newspaper images, portraiture, astronomy, pornography and nighttime imaging used by the military. He is fascinated with the processes of photography and image manipulation. Like those of many of his contemporaries, his photographs are typified by a thoughtful approach to the "non-truth" of the medium. Ruff first became known for a series of large-scale portraits that had the deadpan format of passport photographs. His portraits and architectural photographs use similar compositional devices: a balanced, frontal pictorial structure, and an emphasis on the building or person being photographed to the exclusion of surrounding details.

Ruff explores a wide range of genres—portrait, landscape, found image, cityscape, etc. His work is rooted in a relentless interrogation of photography and its subjects.

Source: Acquisitions Justification

Artistic Context

Nationality: German

Training: Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf; studied under Bernd Becher

Peers: Thomas Struth; Andreas Gursky

Group: Photography; New Media; 20th century; 21st century;

Provenance: Purchased from Johnen & Schottle Galerie; the artist

Subject: portraits; buildings; contemporary Germany; nudes; the means of producing the image

Other Works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Thomas Ruff

Portrait (Peter Martin), 1988

chromogenic print on photo paper -fibre base

Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund

VAG 88.51.3

Thomas Ruff

Portrait (Isabelle Graw), 1988

Thomas Ruff
Portrait (Stoya), 1986
chromogenic print on photo paper - fibre base
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 94.26

Thomas Ruff
Portrait (Karen Kneffel), 1988
chromogenic print on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 88.51.2

Thomas Ruff
Haus 3, 1988
chromogenic print on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Major Purchase and Acquisition Funds
VAG 2002.27.14

Thomas Ruff
h.l.k.03, 2000
chromogenic print on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Major Purchase and Acquisition Funds
VAG 2002.27.12

Thomas Ruff
Nacht 61, 1992
chromogenic print on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Major Purchase and Acquisition Funds
VAG 2002.27.13

Thomas Ruff
Nacht 11 I, 1992
chromogenic print on paper
Gift of Alison and Alan Schwartz
VAG 2003.7.28

Thomas Ruff
Nacht 20 I, 1994-1995
chromogenic print on paper
Gift of Alison and Alan Schwartz
VAG 2003.7.27

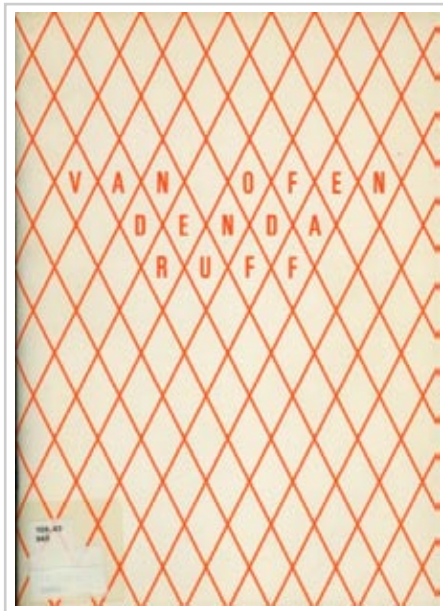
Thomas Ruff
Interior 3C, 1981
chromogenic print on paper
Gift of Alison and Alan Schwartz
VAG 2003.7.29

Thomas Ruff
Interior 4B, 1980
chromogenic print on paper
Gift of Alison and Alan Schwartz
VAG 2003.7.30

Thomas Ruff
Interior 5A, 1979
chromogenic print on paper
Gift of Alison and Alan Schwartz
VAG 2003.7.31

Thomas Ruff

Portrait (Isabelle Graw), 1988



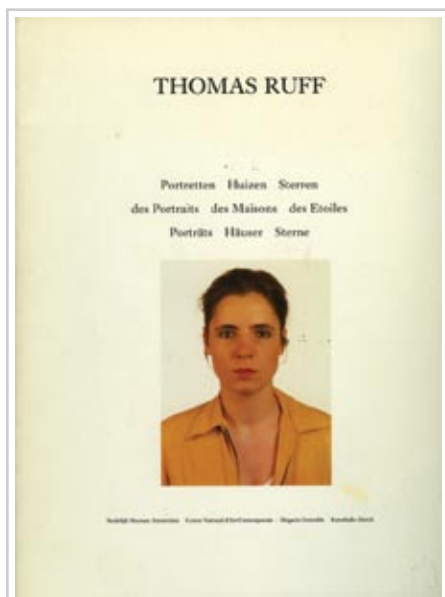
Bibliography

Bilder

Publication
1988

[transcription]

Thomas Ruff - Porträt 1988 - Kat. Nr. 10



Thomas Ruff

Publication
1990

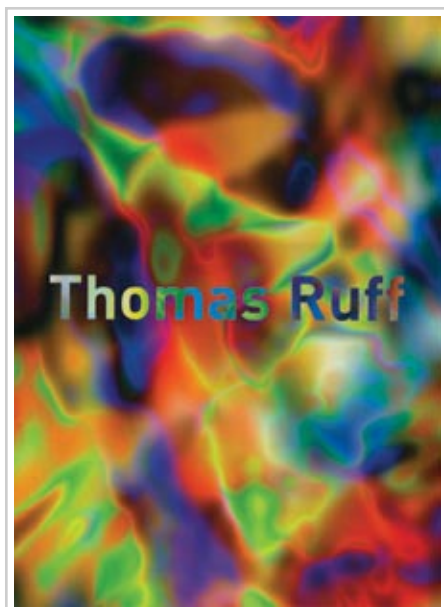
[transcription of excerpt]

Portretten des Portraits Portraits

Isabelle Graw 1988
205 x 160=

Thomas Ruff

Portrait (Isabelle Graw), 1988



Thomas Ruff
Publication
2001

[transcription of excerpt]

Porträts (Portraits)

Thomas Ruff first began working on portraits around 1980, at a time when that genre had largely vanished from the Dusseldorf Academy. In addition to shooting portraits of the Dusseldorf Band EKG, whose 'art director' he was, Thomas Ruff experimented with various other possibilities of portraiture. Along with his own thoughts on pictorial composition, he undertook concentrated study of the portrait genre to come up with a contemporary form of representation. He decided on a bust portrait and a mode of representation that would be as neutral as possible in order to foreground the sitters face while at the same time avoiding any psychological interpretation. Every sitter would be photographed like a plaster bust, based on Thomas Ruff's assumption that photography only shows the surface of things anyway. By 1981 he had already defined the specifications for his pictures: the sitters, wearing their ordinary clothes and seated on a stool, would be photographed with a serious, calm expression on their faces. There was to be no show of feeling, like smiling, grinning, or 'flirting' with the camera. He made an intuitive selection of the people around him as models for these portraits: peers, friends, and acquaintances from the academy or from the night life on 'Ratinger Straße' in Dusseldorf.



A. Porträts (Portraits)—colored background

made between 1981 and 1985

chromogenic color print

executed in two formats
size of motif: 24 x 18 cm

ed. unlimited signed and dated in pencil on verso

fourteen large prints made in 1986
mounted with Diasec Face, wooden frame

size of frame: 210 x 165 cm

ed. 3 or 4AP s

igned, dated, and numbered in pencil on verso

shot with a view camera (negativ 9x12 cm),
studio flash with umbrella, small aperture (f-45),
and short exposure time

The objective was to produce some 100 portraits, each measuring 24 x 18 cm, which would be hung in a row, somewhat like an ancestral gallery. To prevent the series from becoming too monotonous by always using the same background color, Thomas Ruff adopted a principle he had discovered in the course of his researches. The cover of a TV weekly always showed a full-page photograph of a TV star against a different colored background.

He bought simple photographic cardboard (ca. 50 x 70 cm) in different colors. Since he did not want to decide which color matched which person, he asked his sitters to choose their colors themselves. He then took pictures of them en face, in profile, and in semi-profile. In 1986, Thomas Ruff decided to enlarge some of these portraits but soon realized that the color became too dominant in

Thomas Ruff

Portrait (Isabelle Graw), 1988



large format.

PORF054 **Porträt** 1988
[I. Graw]
24 x 18 cm
210 x 165 cm
3 + AP

Further Reading

Cruel and Tender. London: Tate Publishing, 2003.

Eberswalde Library: Herzog & de Meuron. London: AA Publications, 2000.

Porträts. Velbert: Museen der Stadt, 1988.

Thomas Ruff. Munich: Goethe Institute, 1989.

Thomas Ruff. Dusseldorf: Druckerei Heinrich Winterscheid, 1991.

Thomas Ruff. Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1992.

Thomas Ruff: Andere Porträts + 3D. Germany: Cantz, 1995.

Thomas Ruff Nudes. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003.

Exhibition History

Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

Contemporary and Historic Art from the Collection. January 1, 1991 - December 21, 1991.

Contemporary Works from the Permanent Collection. January 1, 1993 - December 31, 1993.

Face to Face: Four Centuries of Portraits. June 19, 1999 - October 3, 1999.

75 Years of Collecting: Portrait of a Citizen. September 23, 2006 - January 1, 2007.

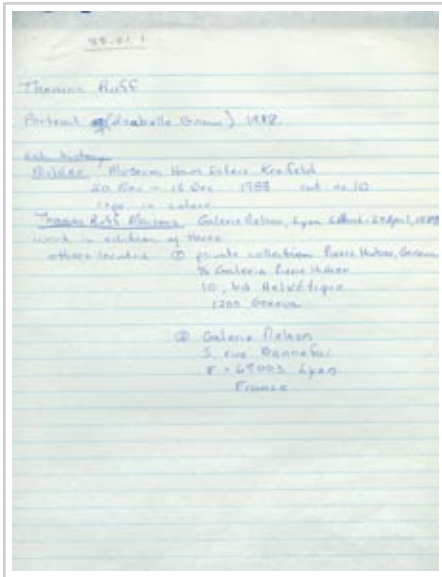
Selected Exhibitions Outside of the Vancouver Art Gallery

Museum Haus Esters, Krefeld. *Bilder*. November 20, 1988 - December 18, 1988.

Galerie Nelson, Lyon. *Thomas Ruff Maisons*. March 6 1989 - April 29, 1989.

Thomas Ruff

Portrait (Isabelle Graw), 1988



Archival History

Note to File

Miscellaneous History

[transcription]

Thomas Ruff

88.51.1

Portrait (Isabelle Graw) 1988.

exh. history

Bilder Museum Haus Esters Krefeld

20 Nov - 18 Dec. 1988 cat. no. 10

repr. in colour

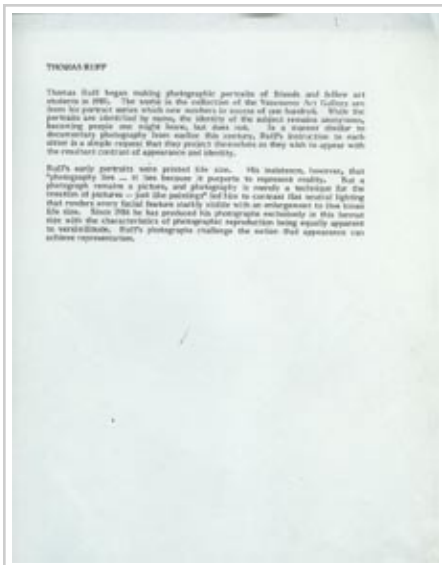
Thomas Ruff Maisons Galerie Nelson, Lyon 6 March - 29 April, 1989

work in edition of three

others located:

1. private collection Pierre Huber, Geneva
c/o Galerie Pierre Huber
10, bd Helvétique
1205 Geneva

2. Galerie Nelson
5, rue Bonnefoi
F - 69003 Lyon
France.



Note to File

Miscellaneous History

[transcription]

THOMAS RUFF

Thomas Ruff began making photographic portraits of friends and fellow art students in 1980. The works in the collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery are from his portrait series which now numbers in excess of one hundred. While the portraits are identified by name, the identity of the subject remains anonymous, becoming people one might know, but does not. In a manner similar to documentary photography from earlier this century, Ruff's instruction to each sitter is a simple request that they project themselves as they wish to appear with the resultant contrast of appearance and identity.

Ruff's early portraits were printed life size. His insistence, however, that "photography lies ... it lies because it purports to represent reality. But a photograph remains a picture, and photography is merely a technique for the creation of pictures — just like paintings" led him to contrast flat neutral lighting that renders every facial feature starkly visible with an enlargement to five times life size. Since 1986 he has produced his photographs exclusively in this format

Thomas Ruff

Portrait (Isabelle Graw), 1988

size with the characteristics of photographic reproduction being equally apparent to verisimilitude. Ruff's photographs challenge the notion that appearance can achieve representation.



Memorandum
Miscellaneous History
1989-02-02

[transcription]

MEMORANDUM

TO: Helle

FROM: Gary

DATE: February 2, 1989

RE: Thomas Ruff photographs

The three Thomas Ruff photographs which have now arrived and are hanging on the racks, are very vulnerable to damage. The photographic paper on the rear of the photograph is completely exposed. Would you please arrange with Glen to have these photographs backed with acid-free cardboard and coreplast. We can re-use the existing frames. As these works in their present condition on the rack are quite vulnerable, we will need to accomplish this as quickly as possible. I understand that acid-free cardboard is available through Opus Framing.

Thanks.

[signed G]

:dem

Thomas Ruff

Portrait (Isabelle Graw), 1988

THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY
750 Hornby St., Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2H7 (604) 682-4668

CONDITION REPORT

ARTIST: THOMAS RUFF

TITLE: PORTRAIT (ISABELLE GRAU)
SILVER GELATIN PRINT

CONDITION: GOOD

NO. [] SECTION: [] DATE: FEB 18 1991

Condition Report

Conservation
1991-02-18

[transcription]

THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY
750 Hornby St., Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2H7 (604) 682-4668

screen 38B

CONDITION REPORT

ARTIST: THOMAS RUFF

TITLE: PORTRAIT (ISABELLE GRAU)
SILVER GELATIN PRINT

CONDITION: GOOD

No. 88.51.1
EXHIBITION / FEB 23. GROUND EAST

DATE: Feb. 18, 91

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