

Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle

Thomas Ruff

neg∅lapresmidi

Feb 09 - Apr 07, 2018

opening: Thursday, Feb 08, 2018, 7 - 9 pm



Thomas Ruff, neg∅lapresmidi_11, 2016, C-Print, 71 x 61 cm, © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018.

Since 2014 Thomas Ruff has been working on his *Negatives*, a series in which he converts the typical sepia tones of early photography into cyan tones, thus not only harking back to the cyanotypes of yesteryear but also, and more importantly, transforming the positive back into its negative form, a process that raises the “means to the end”, namely the tonally reversed, negative image as the prerequisite for the ultimate photograph, to the status of an artwork in its own right. Within this series, Thomas Ruff has developed a new cycle of photographs titled *neg∅lapresmidi* which will be shown in the forthcoming exhibition in its entirety. In a sequence of 25 photographs, Thomas Ruff follows in the tracks of the dance legend Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950). Nijinsky was a world-famous dancer of great virtuosity whose leaps through the air seemed to defy gravity. The ballet *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, which Nijinsky choreographed to the music of Claude Debussy, was first performed in Paris in 1912 by the Ballet Russe and since then has counted among the milestones of modern choreography. Nijinsky's analytical approach to movement made his faun one of the turning points in the history of dance, for it was in this role that Nijinsky took the very first steps towards abstraction in ballet. Causing no end of scandal, the ballet tells the story of a young faun that on a hot afternoon courts several nymphs in vain and finally satisfies his desire on a veil discarded by one of the nymphs.

Nijinsky's performance has survived in the photographs taken by Baron Adolphe de Meyer, a pioneer of photography who in these photographs succeeded exceptionally in capturing the movement and choreography of the ballet. Using this historically and photographically fascinating source material, Thomas Ruff has created a cycle of photographs that not only revives the individual sequences of this unique ballet performance but also, and most ingeniously, expresses the extraordinary sensuality of the dancers' bodies and their movements. Through Ruff's technique of tonal inversion, light, shadow and movement are dramatically heightened and accentuated in new compositions of light and dark that result in completely different visual experiences and impressions of depth. The nymphs seem to be bathed in veils of light, heightening their allure to the very extreme. Nijinsky's choreographic devices are brought out even more strongly through the inversion of light and dark. Clearly discernible are the angular positions of the dancers' arms and their abstract movements executed in profile. Light and shadow here become the visual equivalents of movement. Photography as a reminiscence of dance, music and historical photography is here interpreted by the most innovative photographer of our time.

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