



托瑪斯·德曼  
THOMAS  
DEMAND

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The  
Stutter  
of History

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Gallery 1A 1B

 臺北市立美術館  
TAIPEI FINE ARTS MUSEUM

# THOMAS DEMAND

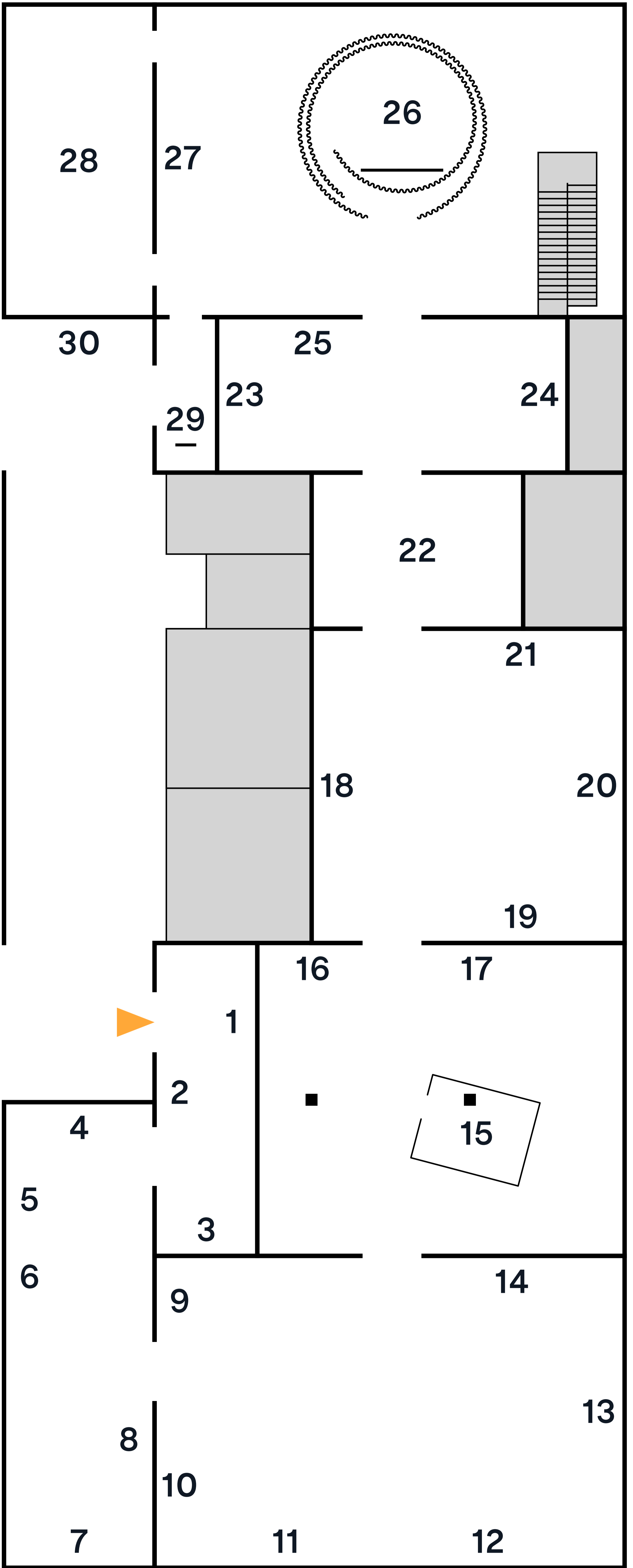
## The Stutter of History

Thomas Demand has spent three decades exploring the intersections of history, images, and built forms. In his large-scale photographs—gnawingly disturbing facsimiles of places and episodes that one cannot quite identify—Demand investigates the way images embed themselves in a society’s collective memory. While his photographs at first appear to depict the real world, upon closer inspection, they seem both familiar and decidedly strange.

Born in Munich in 1964, Demand originally took up photography while studying at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf as a way to document his sculptures—ephemeral paper reconstructions of everyday objects. Soon, he turned the tables and began building paper sculptures for the sole purpose of photographing them. This became the basis of his entire artistic practice.

Demand selects his source imagery from the media, recreates those often-banal images as life-size models using colored paper and cardboard, photographs them, and prints them at a monumental scale. Afterward, he destroys his models, leaving behind only the ghostly photographic doppelgänger. Ultimately, his works are as much about the circulation of images and the politics of memory as they are about the specific moments depicted. The “stutter of history” lies in the strange gap between the world we inhabit and the recreated world of paper and cardboard that the artist conjures in his studio.

# Gallery 1A 1B



In *Gangway* (2001), the open yet empty doorway of a generic passenger jet is rendered both unspectacular and uncanny. Has someone just deplaned or are we waiting in anticipation for a famous figure to appear in a grand entrance? While the source for this work was a news photograph of Pope John Paul II visiting Berlin, Demand's image is devoid of any human figures—either world historical or anonymous. The artist draws our attention to the airplane gangway as a site of photographic theater where scripted “entrances” take place in a dramaturgical politics of the circulation of images. Whether it's the Beatles landing in America or the Pope arriving in Berlin, we are left wondering as much about how these photographic moments are constructed as we are about the identities of the actors.

While finishing his graduate studies at Goldsmiths', Demand conceived what we might think of as his first mature work. *Diving Board* (1994) is an almost grisaille rendition of a complex of diving platforms with a grandstand. This work is somewhat unique in his oeuvre as it is not based on a photograph but was solely reconstructed from the artist's memory of the pool in which he learned to swim as a child and is not rendered in a 1:1 ratio (a monumental task that human and paper could not have achieved). When it was first exhibited in a group show at Munich's Haus der Kunst in 1994, *Diving Board* provoked an array of responses that associated its imagery with Nazi Germany, the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and, more specifically, the well-known diving sequence of the film *Olympia* (1938), Riefenstahl's legendary documentary of those games commissioned by the Nazi regime. Demand was keenly aware that this work might generate these associations given its display within the walls of Haus der Kunst, which was originally built by the Nazi regime as a showcase for approved German art. Nonetheless, this reaction speaks to the power of the cinematic images that Riefenstahl created and their viral longevity within the stream of historical consciousness, as any grandstand and modern-looking German diving structure now might automatically be associated with those images and that historical moment. In fact, this swimming complex is a paper reproduction of an entirely different memory, that of an artist who was born in Germany in 1964, twenty-eight years after Riefenstahl's documentary was made.

In *Room* (1994) we are confronted with a shambolic site of destruction in the form of a room that has been blown apart. A table has collapsed onto the floor and is populated with a single crushed sheet of paper. Chairs have been thrown about and broken. Windows have been blown out of their frames. Ceiling tiles have been loosened. What's happened here? What era is it? Is this the eerily haunting aftermath of some kind of natural disaster or deliberate act of destruction? Or is it merely a scene of entropic dissolution and architectural neglect? The image itself does not offer us many clues, and this leaves it open to endless narrative speculation, but its source is a photograph of one of the most dramatic historical failures of all time: the doomed attempt by Claus von Stauffenberg and his co-conspirators to assassinate Hitler in July of 1944. Demand has suggested that he was attracted to reconstructing this image because of its frequent appearance in his childhood schoolbooks, a fact that itself demonstrates the mutual imbrication of history and memory in the world of images. In a sense we might think of Demand's *Room* as the artist's first disaster picture in the spirit of Warhol, or as a cool paper invocation of Géricault's *The Raft of Medusa* (1819). Despite the exactitude and cleanliness of his paper simulation we are left with both a foreboding sense of the ongoing disaster that this event failed to stop and a nagging uncertainty about what exactly happened.

Demand's monumentally scaled work *Archive* (1995) with its hyper orderly stacks of beige cardboard boxes, provides a fascinating example of his early approach to German history in the form of a re-creation of Leni Riefenstahl's film archive. While the uninformed viewer might be unaware of the political and cultural implications of this source image, once they are known it is impossible not to think about the filmmaker's connections to the Nazi regime. Significantly, this is neither an homage to Riefenstahl nor a reconstruction of any of her problematic if startlingly innovative images, but rather a physical re-creation of the brute materiality of her archive, with all its unspoken implications.

What's represented here? What aesthetic or historical ghosts are contained in these boxes? Given its source reference, *Archive* is a radically iconoclastic image, depicting the weight (both physical and cultural) of the arc of an artist's career in the form of reel upon reel of celluloid while denying the viewer a look at those images. Its rigorous, almost minimalist, seriality offers a different take on the act of preserving information (or in this case a filmic legacy) than that of *Office*, with its carnivalesque undoing of years of collecting incriminating secrets in the interest of political oppression. *Archive* is also a quiet picture of another kind of disaster, as embodied in the career of an undeniably brilliant filmmaker who made a choice to make work in the service of an immoral regime.

In these two works – *Archive* and *Office* – one takes in the entire trajectory of twentieth-century German history in what might have been a moment of ground clearing for Demand—in the sense of dealing with that complicated legacy before being able to move on to other stories. Then again, these works are as much about the circulation of images and the politics of memory as they are about the specific moments that they document.



In *Office* (1995) we are confronted with a site of destruction in the form of an office that has apparently been ransacked, with its cabinets and file folders emptied out all over the floor and table. A lone articulated office lamp bears witness to the scene as haphazardly strewn sheets of typing paper created by Demand remain blank, refusing to offer clues as to their purpose or the information they might have held. In fact, these sheets of paper stand in for files denoting secret observations about the lives of individuals living within the borders of a police state. Here Demand uses paper to create an image about the moral and political implications of its use in secret police archives, as this is a reconstruction of a photograph of a ransacked office of the Stasi, the East German secret police, after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In *Staircase* (1995) Demand drew upon his own memory to construct a three-dimensional paper sketch of a staircase at the school he attended in his youth. Its floating structure ascends to the top of the picture, with its painted red, minimal railing snaking through the image like some kind of modernist Laocoön. This image evokes the form follows function ethos of Germany's Weimar Republic-era Bauhaus school and, more specifically, legendary staircases like the one created by Bauhaus emigré Mies Van der Rohe for the Arts Club of Chicago (1948–51). These two early works by Demand set up a dance between personal and collective memory and the power of images as they are shaped and flow through both of these arenas. If *Diving Board* and *Staircase* act as triggers of a kind of architectural Proustian remembrance for the artist, each of them also cleaves to the diametrically opposed visual cultures of German fascism on the one hand and, on the other, the utopian design aspirations of the adherents of the Bauhaus school, most of whom fled Germany to escape the tyranny of the former. It's impossible to separate these historical readings from the deeply personal remembrances of the artist who constructed these images, as they are each in essence screens on which memory and history collide and the beginnings of many potential but unspoken stories are triggered.

In *Studio* (1997), Demand foregrounds his ongoing concern with the construction of visual truth as he recreates an archival photograph of the television set of the 1970s West German television quiz show “*Wer bin ich?*” (“Who am I?”). The first example of this now common televisual genre on German television, “Who am I?” involved a panel of semi-famous panelists attempting to guess the vocation of a mystery guest through a series of questions. Invoking the perpetual dance between truth and fabrication, Demand’s representation of the empty if colorful set designs for this program highlights the dissemination of images through this broadcast medium and its role in creating lived fictions.

In *Labor (Laboratory)* (2000) Demand recreated an image of an anechoic chamber, a soundproof echoless room, specifically engineered by the automobile manufacturer BMW to test the noise levels of cars as if they were speeding through an empty field devoid of wind or any acoustic obstacles. Demand's image depicts a fragment of this chamber—the uppermost part of the chamber where a corner meets the ceiling. Almost abstract in its appearance with its highly engineered acoustic foam pylons forming a kind of geometric Moiré-like texture, we are brought back into the here and now as the four microphones suspended from the ceiling come into focus. Used to capture the sounds generated by BMW's tests, these microphones signal a purpose parallel to that of Demand's camera in that they record the acoustic simulations of the real world as recreated in this laboratory. In this work Demand has captured the visual look of the sound of silence while revealing the artifice at work in the world of engineering.

In Demand's *Tribute* (2011), the artist recreates a photograph of a spontaneous shrine that arose in the wake of a tragic mass panic at a rave. Memorials such as this are makeshift, transitory monuments constructed hastily through the uncoordinated actions of anonymous individuals and then preserved and circulated in photographs before their eventual disappearance. In this work depicting a bricolaged altar destined for the waste bin, Demand addresses the fragility of memory and its reliance on a photographic record to give it sustenance. In the wake of the torrential flood of tragic events in the media with one displacing another with a voracious rapidity, images such as these act as reminders that keep particular tragedies in the public consciousness for one or two extra days while news reporting catches up before they eventually fade into the forgetful abyss of the news cycle.

In *Zimmer* (1996), Demand reconstructs an image of the hotel room where the controversial American writer and Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard lived and worked between 1972 and 1973 writing his seminal text *Dianetics*. Hubbard was famously reclusive, lived his life and worked in hotel rooms and was rarely photographed (there are only seven known existing photographs of the author).

Devoid of the actual presence of the prophet of a so-called church, we are presented only with the tools of the dissemination of his ideas—an electric typewriter, paper, books, an ashtray and a coffee cup—all of which are casually tossed about in a well-used and disheveled room. Demand's photograph presents us with a *Wizard of Oz* moment by pulling back the curtain and revealing the true origins of an author who went on to construct a cult-like global organization with its own questionable claims to the truth.

Sometimes disaster is far from spectacular in its visible effects. Demand's *Ruin* (2017), on the other hand, becomes a kind of stock image of all the disasters that circulate in the news media around the world. This nearly colorless depiction of a destroyed room, with its universally recognizable plastic chairs buried in rubble, is a flat and banal counterpoint to the Grand Guignol of Andy Warhol's silkscreen car crashes. We don't need to know that the original source image captured children playing in this wreckage of a home in Gaza after a missile strike, as images like this have become depressingly interchangeable and circulate digitally as generic markers of an almost pornographic deployment of disaster and suffering. Demand's intentionally blank paper repetition of one of the endlessly interchangeable tragedies of contemporary conflict makes us question the very circulation of these images in the political economy of suffering, resistance, and exploitation that has come in part to define our contemporary culture of image consumption.

*Poll* (2001) was based on an image of a series of desks at one of the secure centers where the Florida recount was taking place for the 2000 American presidential election that pitted Al Gore versus George W. Bush. As it turned out, the future of an entire global order and millions of lives were at stake in this political battle over paper, centered here on a few hundred hanging chads—incompletely punched holes in the ballots next to the candidates' names. In Demand's version we see stacks of sorted ballots with no traces of holes piled next to phones, file folders, and the flashlights used to determine whether the ballots had been acceptably "punched."

Unusually for Demand's work, *Poll* was created contemporaneously with the event depicted and was exhibited prior to its denouement—the swearing in of Bush as the forty-third president of the United States in January 2001.



In Demand's work *Control Room* (2011), the artist has constructed some kind of generic industrial-scientific complex arrayed with consoles replete with unrecognizable gauges, multiple control levers, computer screens, and read outs. Surprisingly, the desks are also populated by file folders full of papers and what appear to be operating manuals. As with all of Demand's work, this space is devoid of any visible human presence, its blank screens implying that this is a dead space. After an initial scan of this image, it is clear that something is not quite right here. We notice that the plastic tiles of its illuminated dropped ceiling have all come loose and hang precariously over this abandoned control room. Only after learning that this is a re-creation of a Tokyo Electric Power Company technician's cell phone image of the abandoned and severely damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in the aftermath of Japan's 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami do we begin to question the mute serenity of this image, which in the end is about technological hubris and the illusion of control. When talking about the original images from Fukushima Demand has stated that "we are not looking at disaster but at an image of disaster."

*Podium* (2000) documents the site of an inflammatory political speech given by Slobodan Milošević in 1989 commemorating Serbian nationalists' observation of the six-hundredth anniversary of the battle of Kosovo that would presage the horrors of the subsequent wars and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. The small podium, with its signs of human presence—microphones and a water glass—shrinks in significance underneath the quasi-fascistic graphic design of its stage. Significantly, this is one of the few works by Demand that offers any graphic clues as to its origins and significance. His reproduction of the numerical rendition of the years “1389” and “1989” in the stage backdrop had an overdetermined ideological connotation within that context that would produce the oncoming human tragedy.

In his *Refuge* (2021) series, Demand looks once again at the banal domestic spaces in which world historical figures find themselves. In the five works that make up this series, Demand explores the room in which the fugitive American national security whistleblower Edward Snowden was presumed to have lived in Sheremetyevo, Russia. As an internet technology specialist working as a contractor for the National Security Agency, Snowden leaked tranches of classified documents to a group of investigative journalists that provided evidence of an ongoing program of global surveillance of electronic correspondence and telephone conversations by American espionage agencies. On June 14, 2013, the USA charged Snowden in with espionage and theft of state property. Soon afterwards he fled from the United States, first to Hong Kong and then to Russia, where he spent more than a month in the transit zone of Sheremetyevo airport before being granted permanent residency. Demand's photographs reconstruct Snowden's hotel room that is depicted as a bleak, windowless space with a generic corporate business ennui. This pristinely tidy de-facto detention cell is the ultimate no-man's land for a stateless person: a wired phone sits on the bedstand, a blank television screen emits its chilly glow from a nearby wall, a lone wall lamp stands in for a window next to a crisply made bed, and a soulless corporate hotel hallway frames a bright red fire hose which both evokes danger but is also the only colorful "life" in this perpetually twilight environment. Finally, Demand takes a radical point of view in *Refuge I*

by depicting the hotel room's dropped ceiling in which a smoke detector, air vent, sprinkler head and overhead light populate and interrupt the quasi-modernist geometry of the gridded ceiling tiles. Taken from the perspective of a person lying on the bed, these basic elements of the architecture of a hotel room take on the ominous paranoid character of potential listening devices. Together these images depict the banality of a state of emergency in a modern world of technological surveillance.

In *Bathroom* (1997), Demand recreates an infamous news photograph of a bathtub in the Hotel Beau-Rivage in Geneva, Switzerland, where Uwe Barschel, the Minister of the German state Schleswig Holstein, was found dead on October 11, 1987, of an apparent suicide that has been variously theorized as a murder. Barschel was the center of a political scandal in which he was accused of hiring a private detective to uncover damaging information about the sex life of one of his party's political opponents. Having been forced to resign his position, Barschel flew to Geneva and checked into the Beau Rivage Hotel where he was hoping to meet an informant with information that would clear him of any wrongdoing in the scandal. The image of Barschel's lifeless body taken by the journalist who discovered his body one day later became the center of a story about the ethics of photojournalism as well as the use of photographs in constructing political narratives.

Demand empties the image of the politician's body and leaves the viewer with only the scenographic remnants of the political theater of images.

In *Folders* (2017), Demand asks us once again to consider the role of paper in the grander scheme of history. This image is a reconstruction of the theatrical presentation of “evidence” by Donald Trump and his lawyers at a press conference in January 2017 in which he pledged to remove himself from control of his various business interests before assuming the American presidency in order to remove any conflict of interest. The press conference was marked by the then-President’s extreme unwillingness to allow reporters to look more closely at the stacks of folders which themselves suspiciously looked to be full of empty sheets of paper. Here paper becomes a veritable sculpting of “truth” deployed in the service of politics.

Personal memory and collective remembrance are the polestars of much of Demand's practice. For example, *Heldenorgel* (2009) depicts the inner workings of an outdoor organ built in 1931 on the German-Austrian border that constitutes a sonic monument to the victims of World War I. Constructed with 4,307 pipes and 46 registers this is the largest open-air organ in the world and has played the same haunting tune every day at noon for over 90 years as a permanent if intangible tribute composed of musical notes that echo throughout the landscape. In this work Demand addresses collective structures of mourning and how we remember the dead while conveying the fragile impermanence of memory—the immateriality of a musical score—that lies at the material and conceptual core of Demand's artistic practice.

In *Workshop* (2017) Demand presents the viewer with another perspective on the artist's atelier in the form of the orderly interior of a violin-maker's studio. Based on historical photos from a Bavarian village celebrated since the seventeenth century for its exceptional violins, the image includes racks of tools and dozens of instruments in various stages of completion. Describing the violin as having "a shape that has fallen out of time," the artist emphasizes the continuation of the very traditional and sophisticated handmade craftsmanship of violin makers. As such, *Workshop* becomes a metaphor acknowledging the perseverance of the hand in the face of the robotic industrialization of our contemporary world.



For his work *Clearing* (2003), Demand artist constructed over 270,000 paper leaves to create an idyllic scene of a forest with a golden light pouring through its canopy. *Clearing* speaks to the unfounded Romantic vision of a pure, unadulterated prelapsarian nature that has never ever existed outside of the philosophical frameworks of humankind. Demand's paper reconstructions of these scenes are no less artificial than these utopian "no places." In the end Demand's image asks, in a world so fully suffused with artifice, "what is the natural?"

In *Atelier* (2014), Demand has re-created a photograph of Henri Matisse's studio that the artist carried around for many years. Here we see a warm profusion of the multicolored remnants of Matisse's paper cutouts, strewn across the golden parquet floor of his studio with a kind of nonchalant sprezzatura as he worked. In Demand's paper re-creation of this photograph, Matisse's cuttings become markers of the negative space of the artist's creative process and an acknowledgment of both the delicate ephemerality and the endless possibilities offered by the medium of paper. *Atelier's* warm explosion of color and personal creativity provides a philosophical bookend to the dark pathos of the use of paper in the explosion of secret police dossiers in *Officer* the nihilistic staging of political "truth" in the form of Donald Trump's stack of so-called documents in *Folders*.

In 2008 Demand made a radical move in his practice that in retrospect seems like an almost inevitable closing of a circle in a shift from the monumental to the personal and quotidian. For his series *Dailies* the artist started to construct paper models re-creating personal photographs taken with his iPhone on walks through his neighborhood and in the places he traveled. Domestically sized and printed with a soon to be defunct dyes transfer process, they are framed in a manner similar to traditional photographs and depict seemingly ordinary and at times humorously absurd moments that we all pass by unawares each and every day—chewing gum stuck in the grill of an air return, plastic cups inserted into the holes of a chain link fence, an empty frozen yogurt cup with its pink plastic spoon, laundry sitting inert in the window of a clothes dryer, or a taut dog leash wrapped around a light post, its captive located somewhere off screen. Standing in creative opposition to the grand scale and topics of his larger historical works, they emphasize an intimacy and attention to the minor episodes and often overlooked moments of ad hoc grace, wonder, and hilarity that populate our lives. Every *Daily* seems to offer the opening sequence to a story that remains to be written. Who left that bar of soap perched precariously on the edge of the sink in *Daily #21*? How long has that pile of mail been accumulating beneath the mail slot in the front door in *Daily #27*, and what does it portend? What was written on the yellow photocopied poster with the takeaway tags that is stapled to the telephone pole in *Daily #34*? “We pay cash for homes”? A

phone number to report a missing pet? Perhaps the invisible dog from *Daily #28* went missing? These works are both an autobiographical account of the artist's movements through the world and a celebration of the narrative power of minor events and situations. Although this series has a quickly approaching expiration date, as the materials and process needed to print these works is quickly disappearing, the *Dailies* will nonetheless continue to offer a complementary personal counterpoint to Demand's more monumental photographic reconstructions of the marginal images of history. When history stutters, Demand's *Dailies* fill the gaps.

The idea of the theme of “stolen images” has been an interest of Demand’s for some time in both its literal manifestations as well as its metaphorical relationship to the practice of photography and was the subject of an exhibition that the artist curated in 2016 entitled *L’image Volée*. Demand’s *Vault* is based on a police photograph of a storeroom at the Wildenstein Institute in Paris, where thirty paintings and sculptures that had been missing for decades were discovered during a 2011 police raid to investigate alleged tax evasion by the prominent art dealing family. The photograph accompanied an article in the *New York Times* published on July 20, 2011. When confronted by Suzanne Reinach, the heir of a French Jewish family displaced during the Holocaust, Guy Wildenstein was quoted as stating in a passive claim of innocence that “We have never had an inventory of the vault” and “the heirs had not asked for return of the artworks, otherwise I would have returned them.” In Demand’s picture, as in the photograph on which it is based, Mrs. Reinach’s missing or rather stolen paintings—which include works by Degas, Manet, and Morisot—are wrapped and turned to face the walls as mute hostages. Demand has described this vault as conveying the dignity and monumentality of a Pharaonic grave.

While Demand has turned his attention to the effects of the natural world—and specifically the ocean—in works such as *Control Room* and his film *Pacific Sun* – he has also been interested in our culture’s production of “nature” since the beginning of his career. In *Pond* (2020) he rendered a scene completely filled with water lilies. Monumental in scale, Demand’s pond fills the viewer’s field of vision horizontally to create an almost immersive environment while partaking in the hackneyed discourse of beauty generated by the dissemination and wall-poster popularization of Monet’s *Water Lilies*.

Throughout his career, Demand has been interested in our culture's production of "nature." In the end many of Demand's images ask, in a world so fully suffused with artifice, "what is the natural?" In *Grotto* (2006), for example, Demand famously attempted to ask this question by calling our attention to the legacy of the aesthetic theory of the Sublime in nature in relation to the power of photography to form (or deform) experience and personal memory. To produce this image Demand used thirty-six tons of cardboard to construct a life-size underground cavern before preserving its image photographically.

Like the stalagmites and stalactites it depicts, which have been built up geologically over millennia out of the mineral content of dripping water, Demand constructed this work out of layer after layer of cardboard. The image it re-creates is one that we might have seen many times before in the thousands of postcard images of caves sold in gift shops around the world. The artist gathered hundreds of these postcards, and the final photographic version of *Grotto* becomes an ideal condensation of our collective image of a cave that has itself been mediated by the long history of photography.

In this work, the terrifying grandeur of the eighteenth-century philosophical Sublime becomes the Instagram generation's idea of a photo-op, and the spectacle of nature is reduced to a daily post. As if to accentuate the point that neither the Sublime nor the Instagram photo are any less

constructed than one another, Demand allowed the model for this work to be preserved (just this one time, unlike all of his previous or subsequent models), and it currently sits on view in Milan in a basement gallery at the Prada Foundation along with vitrines full of his research.

Perhaps the sheer weight of its factual material existence and its case-study approach to the concatenations of memory and photography led Demand to allow for *Grotto's* continued physical existence alongside its photographic counterpart: a kind of memorial to the mutual imbrication of objects, memory, and the process of photography.



A particular slap stick absurdity underlies Demand's epic stop-motion animation *Pacific Sun* (2012). In this film the artist reconstructed two minutes of security footage from the cruise ship *Pacific Sun* as it was hit by gigantic waves during a tropical storm off the coast of New Zealand. Removing the employees and guests, Demand spent three years painstakingly conjuring with paper and cardboard the shambolic flow of chairs, tables, storage cabinets, paper plates, computer monitors and, rather hilariously, a single potted plant as they careened back and forth below deck. The ultimate absurdity here is Demand's excruciatingly fastidious act of re-creating a few moments of uncontrolled chaos as the natural world unexpectedly buffeted the manufactured engineering of the boat. In his directorial reconstruction of this almost Brechtian disruption of the happy middle-class dream of a cruise ship holiday, the artist becomes a choreographer of the world around us, using paper to reconstruct a random ballet out of the flotsam and jetsam of the inert and starkly unremarkable objects that silently populate our lives.

In *Landing* (2006) we see the aftermath of a highly unfortunate accident at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England. As the story goes, a visitor was headed up a staircase to what they thought were the painting galleries only to trip on their shoelace when they realized that they were on their way to the pottery wing. The resulting pratfall ended in the destruction of two Ming-era vases that had been displayed on the landing.

The irony of Demand's meticulous and exacting paper reconstruction of this scene of destruction is not lost on us, as his own model would itself later be relegated to the recycling bin after it was photographed. The conservation and preservation of material culture that is the sine qua non of museums is here explosively undone by an unfortunate choice of location, poor wayfinding signage, and a fall worthy of Buster Keaton.

As Thomas Demand has suggested when discussing his practice, “I guess the core of it is making the world into a model by redoing it and stripping off the anecdotal part, that’s when it becomes an allegory, and the project becomes a metaphor. Making models is a cultural technique—without it we would be blind.” Perhaps this is why he departed from his technique of sculpturally reconstructing existing images of the world to focus his lens directly on the existing preparatory paper models of architects and designers in his *Model Studies* series while he was in residence in 2011 at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. Whether offering us fragmented and unadulterated views of the flimsy and surprisingly provisional maquettes of midcentury architects like John Lautner and contemporary architectural firms like SANAA, or the radical paper dress patterns of the fashion designer Azzedine Alaïa, Demand’s *Model Studies* reveal that the world around us is constructed on a foundation of paper.

A bouquet of balloons floats lazily across a concrete and brick sidewalk, its gaseous buoyancy held in tentative abeyance by the weight of a bright red plastic clothes pin. Unable to fully escape the effects of gravity, yet not quite securely moored to the ground, we see the ribbons tethering the balloons move to and fro as they engage in a drunken/haphazard minuet. The balloons themselves exist in a state of visual limbo hidden just outside of the edges of the screen, their looming presence marked only by the shadows that they cast on the ground.

This scene of casual grace was painstakingly reconstructed out of paper and brought to life one shot at a time by Thomas Demand's stop motion animation technique. Thousands of subtle movements were individually recorded in this cinematic symphony of a city made of paper. In *Balloons* (2018), Demand brings to life the poetry of the overlooked moments of everyday life that fill the voids between the supposedly more meaningful appointments that fill our calendars and date books while its shadowy suggestion of a group of hovering balloons evokes a Chaplinesque rendition of Plato's parable of the cave in which shadows are seen as an imperfect approximation of the ultimate truth of the world.

“At the foot of the stairs leading into the garden there was a cherry tree covered with what appeared to be magnificent blossoms. I was surprised that it should have bloomed so early, and it occurred to me that, if the cherry was already out, the plum trees must be at their height. Then I realized that the flowers were artificial. Their tint, however, was in no way inferior to that of real blossoms. What skill must have been needed to make them look so life-like! It saddened me to think that they would all be ruined if it started to rain.”

This observation by Sei Shonagon in her early 11th century reflections *Pillow Book* inspired Thomas Demand’s *Hanami* (2014), one of the artist’s wallpapers—photographic works created specifically to be produced and hung as immersive architectural experiences. In this work the artist recreated myriad Japanese cherry blossoms out of paper which he then photographed to produce this densely encompassing image. Its title *Hanami* refers to the traditional Japanese custom of acknowledging the transient character of both beauty and life by celebrating cherry tree blossoms during their short Spring-time bloom. In the case of Shonagon’s observations on artificial cherry blossoms and Demand’s deliberate recreation of his flowers out of paper, *Hanami* offers us a meditation on both the fleeting and cyclical character of life as well as the power of simulation to create beauty in the face of the brutal reality of the world.