About the Exhibition

*Thomas Struth: Nature & Politics* features works that examine how human ambition and imagination physically manifest in the highly complex constructions that shape our world. This show comprises recent work by celebrated German artist Thomas Struth, focusing on photographs he has made in the last six years.

Many of the photographs record the structural complexities of remote techno-industrial and scientific research spaces, such as physics institutes, pharmaceutical plants, space stations, dockyards, and nuclear facilities. Struth uncovers sites of scientific development typically hidden from public view. His images also reveal the layers of politics and the influences of the past and present often found in human-crafted environments.

About the Artist

Born in 1954 in Geldern, Germany, and currently based in Berlin, Thomas Struth is renowned for both his dedication to large-format photography and the impact of his tightly structured, intellectual, and psychologically charged work. He attended the Academy of Fine Arts Düsseldorf from 1973 to 1980 and trained under Gerhard Richter and Bernhard and Hilla Becher.

After initially taking up painting, Struth turned fully to photography in 1976, when he began creating large-scale prints. Struth has explored various subjects, including families, cityscapes, museums, sites of human conflict, and facilities for scientific research.

This exhibition was co-organized by the Museum Folkwang, Essen; Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, in collaboration with the St. Louis Art Museum. In Atlanta, this exhibition is made possible with support from Delta Air Lines and the Donald and Marilyn Keough Family. Additional support is provided by Friends of A Year in Photography and Friends of Photography.
**Architecture and Design**

Split students into small groups to consider the following:

- How does design affect productivity? What in Struth's images reflects good design? What reflects poor design?
- Learn more about design here: [http://web.simmons.edu/~benoit/lis470/WhyDesign_inside.pdf](http://web.simmons.edu/~benoit/lis470/WhyDesign_inside.pdf)
- Compare and contrast two images in the exhibition. How are the spaces alike? How are they different? Why might the artist have been interested in each? What do you think he found visually compelling?

Students can work individually or in teams to photograph examples of architecture and design in their own communities. Ask students to photograph spaces that bring people together and are:

- Visually compelling
- Accessible
- Innovative
- Personally meaningful

Use the prompt, “If these walls could talk” to encourage students to embody the spaces they explore. Students should consider:

- What is this space used for?
- Who occupies this space?
- What can you see from this space?
- What can you smell in this space?
- How has this space changed over time?

**Science and Technology**

Facilitate a group discussion using the following questions:

- What do you see in Struth’s images that indicates his interest in science and technology?
- Struth states, “I want to reconsider how the process of imagination and fantasy works in general, how something which has built up in someone’s mind has materialized and become reality.” With this quote in mind, how do you think science, technology, and art are similar?
- Why might Struth be interested in science and technology?

Struth’s photographs reflect his interest in human innovation, ingenuity, and imagination. He often captures images of structures that maintain or improve the world we live in. However, the functions of the structures are often difficult to understand just by looking at them.

Have your students imagine that they have been hired by the High Museum of Art to create visitor resources that help explain the function of some of the high-tech structures Struth depicts. Students can create drawings, diagrams, extended labels, or videos to provide more contextual information about one of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEVICE OR STRUCTURE</th>
<th>STRUTH IMAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-harmonic-generation spectrometer</td>
<td>High Harmonic Generator Spectrometer, Weizmann Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particle accelerator</td>
<td>AGLAE, C2RMF, Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokamak</td>
<td>Tokamak Asdex Upgrade Periphery, Max Planck IPP, Garching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacuum chamber</td>
<td>Vacuum Chamber, JPL, Pasadena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z-Pinch plasma lab</td>
<td>Z-Pinch Plasma Lab, Weizmann Institute, Rehovot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREAT infrared spectrometer telescope</td>
<td>GREAT, Armstrong Hangar 703, Palmdale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students can respond to the following prompts:

- What is the function of this structure?
- When was it invented?
- Why do you think the artist chose to photograph it?
Social Studies

Thomas Struth has traveled the world to photograph an array of locations. Have students create a travel itinerary for places around the world that align with themes Struth explores in his work. For example:
- Human ingenuity
- Scientific development
- Sites of political or religious conflict
- Cultural institutions

Many of Struth’s images investigate how conflict affects spaces. Encourage close looking of the following images:
- Hushniya, Golan Heights
- Outskirts of Ramallah, Ramallah
- TA’I-Ram Quarry, Kafr ‘Aqab

Ask students to consider the following questions:
- What is happening in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What might have happened here?
- What might happen here in the future?
- Why might Struth have photographed this location?

Ask students to identify contemporary conflicts happening in their community, state, or country. Through a short essay, students can consider the following questions:
- If they were to take pictures of places that represent those conflicts, what would those images look like?
- What would the locations be? Why were they chosen?
- Who would be in the images, if anyone? Why or why not?

Photography

Use Thomas Struth’s work to explore large-format photography and how images are constructed. Have students research the type of camera and techniques that Struth uses. Extend this exploration to research other photographers who are members of the Düsseldorf School or who are known for their large-format photography, such as Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, and Sally Mann.

Struth is interested in the limitations of photography. Compare photography with other art media, such as painting, sculpture, or media arts.
- Have students write persuasive essays that argue the strengths and recognize the limitations of a specific medium.

Curriculum Standards

6th Grade:
- VA6MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.
- VA6MC.2 Identifies and works to solve visual problems through creative thinking, planning, and/or experimenting with art materials, tools, and techniques.
- VA6MC.3 Interprets how artists communicate meaning in their work.
- VA6MC.4 Engages in dialogue about his or her artwork and the artwork of others.
- VA6CU.1 Discovers how the creative process relates to art history.
- VA6CU.2 Investigates and discovers personal relationship to community, culture, and the world through making and studying art.
- VA6AR.2 Critiques personal artworks as well as artwork of others using visual and verbal approaches.
- VA6AR.3 Reflects and expands use of visual language throughout the artistic process.
- VA6C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.
- VA6C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.
- VA6C.3 Expands knowledge of art as a profession and/or avocation.

7th Grade:
- VA7MC.1 Identifies and works to solve visual problems through creative thinking, planning, and/or experimenting with art materials and methods.
- VA7MC.2 Identifies and works to solve visual problems through creative thinking, planning, and/or experimenting with art materials and methods.
- VA7MC.3 Interprets how artists create and communicate meaning in and through their work.
- VA7MC.4 Participates in dialogue about his or her artwork and the artwork of others.
- VA7CU.1 Discovers how the creative process relates to art history.
- VA7CU.2 Investigates and discovers personal relationship to community, culture, and the world through creating and studying art.
- VA7AR.3 Reflects and expands the use of visual language throughout the artistic process.
- VA7C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.
- VA7C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.
- VA7C.3 Expands knowledge of art as a profession and/or avocation and increases personal life skills through artistic endeavor.
- S7L2: Students will describe the structure and function of cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems.

8th Grade:
- VA8MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.
- VA8MC.2 Identifies and works to solve visual problems through authentic engagement (thinking, planning, and experimenting) with art methods and materials, exploring the nature of creativity.
- VA8MC.3 Demonstrates how artists create and communicate meaning in artworks.
- VA8MC.4 Participates in aesthetic dialogue about his or her artwork and the artwork of others.
- VA8CU.1 Discovers how the creative process relates to art history.
- VA8CU.2 Investigates and discovers personal relationship to community, culture, and the world through making and studying art.
- VA8AR.1 Critiques personal artworks as well as the artwork of others using visual and verbal approaches.
- VA8AR.2 Reflects and expands the use of visual language throughout the artistic process.
- VA8C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.
- VA8C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.
- VA8C.3 Expands knowledge of art as a profession and/or avocation and develops personal life skills through artistic endeavor.

High School:
- VAHSDRM.1 Engages in the creative process; imagines new ideas by using mental and visual imagery, conceptualizes these ideas by using artistic language and contextual understandings, and accesses learning. The student develops a personal artistic voice that gives unique form to these concepts.
- VAHSVAM.2 Finds and solves problems through open-ended inquiry, the consideration of multiple options, weighing consequences, and assessing results.
- VAHSVAM.3 Cultivates critical thinking and logical argumentation in aesthetics.
- VAHSVAM.4 Analyzes the origins of one’s own ideas in relation to community, culture, and the world.
- VAHSDRRC.1 Articulates ideas and universal themes from diverse cultures of the past and present.
- VAHSDRRC.2 Demonstrates an understanding of how art history impacts the creative process of art making.
- VAHSDRRC.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.
- SSSocC3: Students will analyze social structure and interaction within society.
- SSSocSC4: Students will analyze the function of social institutions as agents of social control across differing societies and times.
- SSSocIC1: Students will analyze forms of social inequality.
- SSSocIC2: Students will analyze social change processes in a society.

Additional Resources

http://www.thomasstruth32.com/smallsize/index.html
http://www.artnet.com/artists/thomas-struth/