

Press Release

Thomas Demand

May 2–August 1, 2026

Public Reception: May 1, 6–9pm

Sprüth Magers, Berlin

Sprüth Magers

Thomas Demand is best known for his photographs of unique paper models that reconstruct scenes charged with historical, political and cultural significance, as well as everyday moments. On the occasion of Gallery Weekend Berlin, Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are pleased to present a solo exhibition of new works by Demand. In 2025, he began working with a new technique, creating smaller-scale images printed on copper. The material has deep roots in art history: In the fifteenth century, goldsmiths' techniques of engraving precious metals were adapted to copper plates for the purpose of making reproducible prints, with etching on copper following in the sixteenth century. Across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was also favoured as a painting support by artists including Jan Brueghel the Elder, Adam Elsheimer, David Teniers the Younger, and Nicolas Poussin. Its smooth surface made it suited to fine detail, and its durability helped it resist some of the deterioration associated with canvas or wood. In the nineteenth century, copper served as the support for the daguerreotype, the earliest commercially successful photographic process, in which light acted on a silver-coated plate to produce an image. It is, then, a material that engages with the histories of both painting and photography.

The first of these new images, *Klee* (2025), shows a close-up of a patch of clover – or shamrock, the three-leafed plant famously associated with Saint Patrick as an emblem of the Holy Trinity. Among the cutout forms, the occasional four-leafed variant can also be found, a rare deviation long regarded as a symbol of good luck. In *Schilf* (2025), Demand has carefully reproduced a wetland scene, including the layered depth, tonal variation and organic forms of reeds. The seemingly reflective surface below, which suggests the soft distortion of frozen water, is made entirely of paper, heightening the work's visual ambiguity. *Paperstars* (2025) depicts white stars decorating a perforated acoustic ceiling of the kind found in public buildings, signalling a celebration. All three draw on a visual vocabulary so ubiquitous that viewers inevitably bring their own associations and memories to them. *Money* (2025) is based on a still from the bizarre AI-generated video Donald Trump posted in early 2025, representing his "Gaza Riviera" plan. In it, a character resembling billionaire Elon Musk flings banknotes into the air against a sunset-lit sky, an image Demand distils and rebuilds by hand, collapsing digital artifice back into physical material.

Two large-scale UV prints on Perspex are also on view in the exhibition. *Melonen* (2025) derives from a press image documenting confiscated contraband – fake melons containing methamphetamine – seized at the US-Mexico border. In an entirely different context, the watermelon was simultaneously circulating as a symbol of solidarity with Palestine. The photo also reminded Demand of Henri Matisse's *The Moroccans* (1915–16), and as these layered associations suggest, the meaning of images can evolve, and multiply, over time. *Eis* (2025) demonstrates this equally well. The photograph depicts the terrain of an iceberg in Greenland with intensely patterned crevasses, imagery that today evokes climate change and glacial melting. The Arctic, once portrayed through photography as a harsh and hostile environment, has been reframed as a romantic symbol of a vanishing landscape under threat.

Through such constructed worlds, the artist interrogates the paradoxes of perception, probing how we read our surroundings, how we remember them, and the ways we are influenced and manipulated by what we think we see. Whether capturing nature's chance arrangements or AI's dystopian visions, Demand's work deftly navigates the space between sculpture and photography, illusion and image, and reality and interpretation.

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Thomas Demand (*1964, Munich) lives and works in Berlin. *Rooms That Dream of the Past*, a solo exhibition of new *Model Studies* by Demand, will be exhibited at MAK, Vienna (May 27, 2026–January 24, 2027). Also in Vienna, *Passant parmi les Pierres*, a group exhibition curated by Demand, will open at fjk3 – Raum für zeitgenössische Kunst and run from May 29 to September 13, 2026. He is the subject of a major touring retrospective, *The Stutter of History*, which opens at Fundación PROA, Buenos Aires, on August 21, 2026, having previously been exhibited at Taipei Fine Arts Museum (2025), Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2024), Jeu de Paume, Paris (2023), Israel Museum, Jerusalem (2023–24), and UCCA Edge, Shanghai (2022). Other selected solo exhibitions include Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto (2022), Centro Botín, Santander, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (both 2021), Fondazione Prada, Venice (2017, 2007), Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (2016), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2015), Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2012), Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2009), Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg (2008), Serpentine Gallery, London (2006), Museum of Modern Art, New York (2005), Kunsthaus Bregenz (2004), Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk (2003), and Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2002). He represented Germany at the 26th São Paulo Biennale in Brazil in 2004.

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