

MARC STRAUS

NEW YORK

THOMAS BANGSTED

Opening Reception:
Friday, September 10th, 4-8 PM

MARC STRAUS is pleased to present our fourth solo exhibition of new works by Detroit based Danish photographer Thomas Bangsted.



Thomas Bangsted, *Excavation II*, 2016
Pigment print
63.5 x 68.47 inches (161.3 x 173.9 cm)
Edition of 3 + 1 AP

Bangsted has always set about to make images that initially seem impossible to capture. He accomplishes this in the end by spending as many as five years returning to the locus, reshooting images, recrafting a composite, all while adding or subtracting material.

In recent years he's focused on images of moments from Danish history that were never well documented, if at all. In these new works historical Danish sculptors, C.J. Bonnesen (1868-1933) and Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844) are his subjects. Bangsted addresses ideas of national history, heritage, myth, grandeur, and dramatic decay. Bangsted lived in Denmark until he was a young adult. These images hark back to familiar Danish landscapes, but have

largely been constructed in Michigan, where Bangsted lives and works. He travels extensively, sometimes taking hundreds of large-format negatives, to then painstakingly montage into these images, in order to convey his vision of these historical passages.

One group of new black and white photographs recreates the precarious relocation of Bonnesen's largest public work from 1926; the bronze monument 'Thor's Fight with the Jötunns.' A complex group of bronze figures twisted together mid-battle, the Nordic god Thor ploughing through a gang of bloodthirsty giants (jætter) in a chariot pulled by his two giant goats. Originally commissioned by a WWI profiteer who had made a small fortune selling goulash to both sides, it was placed on the highest point of his private island Thorø (Thor's Island). Haunted by creditors, he would later commit suicide on this island. In a short time, the forest grew around the monument, and it was forgotten, despite the prominence it had upon being first unveiled. Rediscovered mid-century, it was dug up, moved by cart and raft off the island, and during a quiet winter night rolled to its new home. An example of his meticulous process, Bangsted had to recreate a close replica

MARC STRAUS

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of the large cart used for this transport, by retrofitting an American hay wagon with a winch and steel skeleton in his backyard. After the sculpture was installed on the lawn of a factory in Odense on the mainland it was soon mostly forgotten again. This pioneering example of Danish Vitalist Modernism still rests there to this day with limited public visibility. Bangsted photographed the work in its modern corporate campus setting. He then dug muddy holes in the US, built re-created carts in Detroit, hired models to wear period clothes, captured landscapes in rural Denmark and the rural Midwest, and weaves them into his images to illustrate the famed but forgotten move of this sculpture in the 1950s.



Thomas Bangsted, *The Courtyard in Thorvaldsen's Museum*, 2018-2021
Chromogenic print
71 x 82.5 inches (180.3 x 209.5 cm)
Edition of 4 + 2 AP

The second group of photographs in the exhibition, illustrates the inner courtyard of Thorvaldsens Museum in Copenhagen, looking back into the structure's 170-year history. In 1838, the frigate Rota returned from Livorno, Italy with Thorvaldsen's lifework and personal collection, which had been bequeathed to the city to be housed in the nation's first public art museum. Upon opening in 1848, this inner courtyard demonstrated rich colors, accentuating the stark contrast between its Nordic placement and the exotic Mediterranean flora that decorates the cement-plastered walls. Now faded from grandeur, environmental degradation has stripped the friezes of their original

colors and washed-out substantial parts of the line work. Bangsted, through his art, brings it back to the glory days of 1848. By consulting color samples utilized for an earlier reconstruction of the museum's exterior he was able to recreate the walls original color and contrast. A trove of historic material from the museum's archive was used as a source for the effort of redrawing the contours of all the detailed friezes. At last, he reproduces the idealized perspective of the courtyard as seen in a depiction from 1847 by Danish painter C.O. Zeuthen. Bangsted speaks to the layered lives and wonderful histories that exist beneath the recognizable surfaces.

Thomas Bangsted (b. 1976, Denmark) received a MFA in Photography from Yale University, School of Art in 2007. Bangsted has had numerous solo shows in Denmark including Brandts 13 (2018), Galleri Tom Christoffersen (2018) and Galleri Hornbaek (2007). Group exhibits include Tang Museum, NY (2016), The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark (2016), The Metropolitan Museum of New York (2015), Knoxville

MARC STRAUS

NEW YORK

Museum of Art, TN (2015), Bronx Museum of the Arts (2011), the Hudson Valley MoCA, Peekskill, NY, The Prague Biennial (2009) and the New York Photo Festival (2008). His work is in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of New York and was included in their 2015 exhibition of recent acquisitions and reviewed in The New York Times.