

# MODERN ART NOTES

*Tyler Green's modern and contemporary art blog*

Friday, June 4, 2004

## LA galleries roundup, part two



**Ori Gersht @ Angles Gallery.** It seems like every day there is bad news from the Middle East. With so much regular news about the horrors of the present, do we sometimes forget about the past? Ori Gerhst's absorbing, washed-out-looking, faux-aged [c-prints of ancient olive trees](#) remind me that the history of the region goes back hundreds, thousands of years. These olive trees were planted there by someone and heck, *they're still there*. History can be cause for optimism.

Gersht lives in London now and visits the Middle East and other war zones from time to time. ([A more complete Gersht arc is here.](#)) But there is no trace of war in these photos as there is in [other works](#) of his. It's as if Gersht is tired of conflict and wants to focus on what lasts rather than what's now.

When I look at these photos, I think of Sally Mann's recent photos of Civil War battlefields: new work, made to feel old and nostalgic; images that are simultaneously haunting and ominous. Gersht's photos are more ambiguous -- these are twisted trees and sandy desert, not a battlefield full of lumpy, shallow graves -- and their aged look seems a little more forced than Mann's work. (A c-print will be a c-print will be a c-print.) Gersht flirts with a Matthew Brady aesthetic but his work feels more painterly than anything else. I guess that's OK, but these are c-prints so they'll degrade over time. The olive trees in these photographs will outlast the artwork. There's some irony there.

I noticed something about the two galleries in which these works were installed. I walked into Angles with two friends. When we walked into the gallery we were chattering away about this and that. When we walked through Gersht's show, surrounded by images of brush-filled desert and olive trees, we stopped talking. There was something immediately placid and hushing about the work.