



#### THE WORK

*Time after Time, Blow Up No. 04*, 2007  
Lightjet print on aluminium, 183 x 250 cm

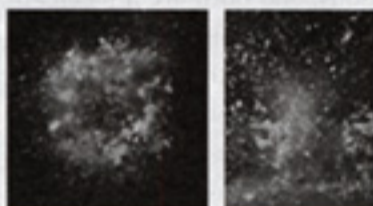
*Time after Time, Blow Up No. 01*, 2007  
Lightjet print on aluminium, 183 x 250 cm

*Time after Time, Blow Up No. 06*, 2007  
Lightjet print on aluminium, 187 x 187 cm

*Time after Time, Blow Up No. 08*, 2007  
Lightjet print on aluminium, 183 x 250 cm

Courtesy of:  
Mummery & Schnelle

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# Time After Time

## Ori Gersht

#### THE ARTIST

ORI GERSHT is a photo artist who lives and works in London. In his latest series of works, entitled 'Time After Time', Gersht seeks to explore the relationship between photography, technology and optical perception.

ORI GERSHT'S WORK HAS ALWAYS conveyed loss, atrocity or violence in resolutely beautiful images. His most recent body of work, *Time After Time, Blow Up*, pushes new boundaries. These are Gersht's most violent images to date, but they are rooted in nineteenth-century French still life painting.

Gersht has immersed flowers in liquid nitrogen and then exploded them, preserving the action of explosion in large photographic works of art. Captured on medium-format Hasselblads with nanosecond technology, these are *impossible* images which force the viewer into a new relationship with the still life and with the nature of time as it is represented in art. Indeed, this is what Walter Benjamin, in his essay *A Short History of Photography*, called the *optical unconscious*: that which it is only possible to see with the aid of technology.

Myths and legends cling to the disintegrating flowers. In *Time after Time, Blow Up No. 01* (2007) the chaos and turmoil in the image is impregnated with symbolism. Red and white roses remain intact at the centre of the image, surrounded by a chaos of petals, stalks, stamens, leaves and mist. The roses retain their traditional associations: life and death; martyrdom and love; purity and rebirth. The fractured anemones, their red, white and blue petals silently fluttering, recall the tears of Aphrodite mourning the death of Adonis. Transience is everywhere: from the pulverised death throes of the flowers to the butterflies wings with their symbolic links to rebirth and resurrection.

The severing of the connection with Henri Fantin-Latour (one of Gersht's most important visual references) and the historicism of the *vanitas* — the literal blowing up of the past — cannot shake the painterly mantle from these huge photographs. For instance, *Time After Time, Blow Up No. 03* (2007) is tethered to the work of artists such as Paul Gauguin and Odilon Redon in their struggle between the real and the symbolic realms. The mark-making in Redon's *Flowers 1909* is echoed by the spatters of petals falling in Gersht's images, their evident speed adding to the painterly effect. Both Redon's and Gersht's flowers are those seen in hallucinations, and both are a means of imagining the unconscious: the convergence of nature, reality and dream.

Gersht's use of flowers can be compared to that of other contemporary artists. Robert Mapplethorpe's floral photography is sculptural and still, his subjects frozen in time and potently sexual. Marc Quinn's *Garden* (2000) is an Eden made from hundreds of flowers embedded in liquid silicone: in the artist's words, *they become an image of the perfect flower, because in reality their matter is dead and they are suspended in a state of transformation between pure image and pure matter*. In her installation *Red on Green* (1992), Anya Gallaccio created a rectangular bed of 10,000 fresh roses which were left to die and decay, their scent filling the gallery.

*Time After Time, Blow Up No.8* (2007) is photographed without a flash and with a slower shutter speed. The tulips, roses and lisianthus emerge from the darkness; their ghostly trails are like soft pastel marks as they journey through the sepia, Hadean gloom. This is Gersht's personal *vanitas*, as well as his *memento mori* ■

*I met the grey mist Death whose eyeless brow  
Was bent on me, and from his hand of chalk  
He reached me flowers from a withered bough...*  
George Meredith, A Ballad of Past Meridian

#### THE WRITER

DR JEAN WAINWRIGHT is an art historian and critic. She is an interviewer for *Audio Arts*, and has made a number of television and radio appearances including the *Today* programme. She is currently completing a book to be titled 'Art and Fame' for IB Tauris.

