

BRAND NEW GALLERY

presents

ORI GERSHT

Still and Forever

1 March - 4 April 2012

Opening: 1 March | 19.00-21.00



Brand New Gallery is pleased to present *Still and Forever*, the first solo exhibition in Italy by the Israeli artist, Ori Gersht.

Through the creation of sublime scenarios that become precipitously unsettling as they gradually decay, the works of Ori Gersht capture prolonged moments of suspense with stop-motion photography and slow-motion video. Recreating the compositions of Old Master paintings, the artist offers a meditation on life, loss, destiny and chance, stopping the constructed moment in time and space in order to make it perceptible in a clear and precise way.

In the series *Blow Up*, which is related to Michelangelo Antonioni, the floral composition recalls the colors of the French flag and refers to the work of Henri Fantin-Latour. Gersht accelerates the disappearance of the still life by literally blowing it up, using a technique whereby the flowers are frozen, then shattered by a violent explosion. The action is captured quite vividly with high-resolution camera (1/7,500th of a second): the images are at once fascinating and disturbing, evoking the dichotomy between chaos and serenity, epitomizing in the random acts of violence not only of European history but that of his native country as well. The same procedure is used in the film entitled *Big Bang*, where fragments of petals, stems and pot shards scatter through the room and fall in slow motion to the floor. In *Pomegranate* the composition, related to a 17th-century still life by the Spanish painter Juan Sánchez Cotán, is traversed this time by a bullet that appears to perforate the frame and pulverize the suspended fruit. Gersht deliberately creates tensions between the old masters and new technologies in a moment of union and simultaneous destruction; of opposites which, for a fraction of a second, merge into one. In *Falling Bird*, based on a still life by Jean Baptiste Siméon Chardin, a pheasant is hang lifelessly by their feet, reflected in a mirror of dark water below, toward which they impotently fall, consumed by their own reflection.

Also on display in the Milan exhibition are several works from the series *Chasing Good Fortune*, realized in Japan during cherry blossom season. In this works, the artist explores the symbolism of this flower, historically and metaphorically. While initially associated with Buddhist concepts of renewal, the celebration of life, and good fortune, the cherry blossom was re-appropriated during Japan's 19th century militarization and colonial expansion. Once celebrated as a healthy and abundant flower, the falling of the petals from the tree became the symbol of Kamikaze soldiers. In this work, Gersht captures the essence of this emblematic flower in a sinister, post-atomic world: the artist's interest in traveling to Hiroshima was in fact divided equally between the lost innocence of the cherry tree and the strength that enables it to continue to blossom in contaminated soil.

More than a critical commentary on violence, Gersht depicts the absurdity that surrounds us, whereby bloody wars are fought in one place while people enjoy a comfortably decadent lifestyle in another: opposite yet parallel existences that sometimes intersect, in the same way that beauty and destruction coexist in his art.

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Ori Gersht was born in Tel Aviv in 1967. Since 1988 he has lived and worked in London, where he took a degree in photography, film and video at Westminster University and a Master of Arts at the Royal College of Art.

His work has been shown in such important museums as the Tate Britain, the Tate Modern, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Imperial War Museum in London, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Santa Barbara Museum, the Tel Aviv Museum, the Frankfurter Kunstverein, the Jewish Museum in New York and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC.

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