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**ORI GERSHT**

***Places That Were Not***

May 22 – June 26, 2010

**Opening reception: Saturday, May 22, 6 - 8 PM**

Angles Gallery is pleased to present *Places That Were Not*, an exhibition of photographs by Ori Gersht. The exhibition brings together two new bodies of work that deal with memory, history, and landscape, *Hide and Seek* (2008) and *Evaders*, (2009.) Though each photograph captures a landscape that is physically present now, the images that Gersht develops evoke a memory of the past or suggest something that might happen in the future.

The images in *Hide and Seek* depict hidden swamps and marshes on the boarder of Poland and Belarus, in what remains of the vast primeval forest that once covered most of Europe. These images portray uncharted locations that, historically, had been places of refuge during times of political conflict. Gersht was interested in photographing these areas that do not, or did not, exist on a map and that therefore may be referred to as 'non-places' or voids. Photography relies on a physical reality that is present under the lens, and yet, Gersht's photographs capture not only the physical but also the metaphysical presence of a place. By attempting to expose the memory of historical events through the photographic lens, Gersht questions the relationship between the objective and the subjective nature of photography.

The swamp images draw upon the recollections of those who were hiding in the swamps and forests during World War II. These accounts were documented by Primo Levi, in his book, "If Not Now, When." The "Drape" images were photographed in the Sobibor forest, where the Sobibor death camp was once sited and was quickly replaced by trees. The Drape photographs were taken through net curtains, traditionally used by villagers to delineate public and private space. By placing these curtains in front of the lens, Gersht diminishes the depth of field, creating the illusion that lace and landscape are melting into one another, while simultaneously disguising and revealing the present forest and the memory of the past.

The cumulative subjective history that has transpired in Gersht's landscapes leaves no physical trace, and so all that remains is a physical landscape. Ori Gersht compounds the events that have occurred in these 'void' spaces, by conflating the events of the past with the reality of the physical present, into a single image. In doing so, *Places That Were Not* explores the dialectic between metaphysical and real places.

In the series *Evaders*, Ori Gersht follows the Lister Route across French Pyrenees that refugees once took to escape from France into Spain during World War II. This was the route taken by philosopher Walter Benjamin, who was said to have carried with him what he considered to be his most important manuscripts. When Benjamin reached the Spanish boarder, he was denied entry into the country. That night, he overdosed on morphine, thereby committing suicide only hours before his group was granted entry the following morning. Benjamin's body and duffle bag, which contained his manuscripts, were never found. Benjamin's failed escape became tagged with a prophetic forecast of the impending cataclysm in Europe.

The long, panoramic images in *Evaders* also reference German Romanticism, in particular the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich. The beauty of the landscapes Gersht captures, and the reference to German romanticism suggest an attachment to German cultural heritage that ended up preventing Benjamin and many others from realizing the horrific scope of the Nazi agenda until it was too late. In addition, Gersht has merged multiple negatives to create the dramatic images in this series. Thus, Gersht curates a world of beauty and calamity, symbolic of the memory of turmoil and the psychological history that remains.

Ori Gersht's works have been exhibited and collected by the Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Tate Modern, London, the Tate Britain, London, The Getty Museum, Los Angeles, the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, the Jewish Museum, Berlin, the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, among others. Ori Gersht lives and works in London, England.

Angles Gallery is located at 2754 S. La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles, CA. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 AM to 6 PM.