

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS

ORI GERSHT

FLOATING WORLD

11 MAY – 16 JUNE 2016

PRIVATE VIEW ON TUESDAY 10 MAY

Ben Brown Fine Arts is pleased to present *Floating World*, the first major gallery show in London devoted to international photographer and 2015 Prix Pictet nominee Ori Gersht. The exhibition will debut the artist's latest body of work, a series of photographs capturing the ancient gardens in Buddhist Zen temples in and around Kyoto.

Working from his London studio, Gersht has gained international recognition over the past fifteen years for his eye-catching still-lives and landscapes, in which he revisits history, journeys and places often defined by trauma. Tensions between past and present, beauty and violence, creation and destruction continue to inhabit Gersht's distinct visual language, expressed through a set of coded references and metaphors.

The artist's iconic landscapes include the *After War* series (1998) for which he received critical acclaim, taken in Sarajevo at the end of the war in Bosnia; the *White Noise* series (2000), shot from the train between Krakow and Auschwitz, with its abstract imagery eerily capturing the passing of time; and more recently *Evaders* (2009), where Gersht retraces the steps of his muse Walter Benjamin's fateful journey across the Pyrenees. Gersht's rare ability to evoke the emotional resonance of these historical sites often stems from his intimate connection to them, as expressed in his famous photographs of the forests in Western Ukraine where his family hid during World War II.

In his still-lives Gersht takes more visible cues from art historical masterpieces, uniting his influences from Spanish and Dutch still-life painting with new technologies. Although highly choreographed he allows his camera to capture the accidental, using subtle metaphors to explore the transience of life. A seminal series titled *Pomegranate* (2006) presents the pomegranate - a religious symbol in Judaism, with its 613 seeds representing the number of commandments in the Torah - in a chiaroscuro still-life setting, capturing the moment it is brutally pierced by a bullet.

In November 2015 Gersht began work on his *Floating World* series in Japan, visiting and photographing the ancient gardens in Buddhist Zen temples in and around Kyoto. Created to reflect the essence of nature and as aids to meditation, these gardens are places where time stands still and history is palpable. For Gersht they represent an alternative to our image saturated 'world in flux'. Gersht focused his lens on water reflections and during the post-production process seamlessly fused reflections with the reflected world to create illusions and a new reality, hovering between what he calls the virtual and

material. In these works we are presented with the absence of the object of representation whereby the photograph becomes the thing that exists, an image of the folding of space and time. Much like in his earlier landscape series, Gersht intends to document something that is not physically present.

The intrigue in virtual and material is a continuation from his celebrated 2014 series, *On Reflection*. The series was inspired by early seventeenth-century paintings by Jan Brueghel the Elder. Having placed a replica of Brueghel's floral bouquet in a mirrored studio, Gersht positioned two high-definition cameras on different optical planes, one on the mirror's glass surface (the material) and the other onto the reflection of flowers (the virtual). Using explosive charges Gersht shattered the mirrors capturing the beautiful split-second fracturing with two focal points: the first witnessing the minute details of craquelure and shards of glass with jewel-toned background while the other renders the vase of flowers with great clarity and vibrancy. Each depicting an alternative reality of the same event, the images question the relationship between creation and destruction and the material and the virtual worlds.

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Born in Tel Aviv, Israel, in 1967, Gersht received a bachelor's degree in photography, film and video at the University of Westminster, London, and a master's degree in photography from the Royal College of Art, London. Gersht has had solo exhibitions at such prestigious institutions as Tate Britain, London; The Photographers' Gallery, London; Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Yale Centre for British Art, New Haven, CT; and The Jewish Museum, New York, NY. Gersht's work is included in numerous private and public collections around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and Israel Museum, Jerusalem. In 2015 Gersht was shortlisted for the prestigious Prix Pictet. He currently lives and works in London.

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Founded in 2004, Ben Brown Fine Arts is located on Brook's Mews in the heart of Mayfair. The gallery has prominently positioned itself on the contemporary art scene with the sole UK representation of artists such as Ron Arad, Tony Bevan, Ori Gersht, Candida Höfer, Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne, Gavin Turk, Not Vital and Heinz Mack. Also renowned for its strong expertise in 20th century Italian art, the gallery has been exhibiting the work of Lucio Fontana and Alighiero Boetti, amongst others, since its inception. In 2009 Ben Brown Fine Arts took their first step in an international expansion with the opening of an exhibition space in Hong Kong.

FOR FURTHER PRESS INFORMATION AND ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:

Reiber + Partners
Catharina van Beuningen
T. +44 (0)20 7436 6082
E. catie@reiberandpartners.com

Ben Brown Fine Arts
12 Brook's Mews, London W1K 4DG
T. +44 (0)20 7734 8888
www.benbrownfinearts.com