

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

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YISHAY GARBASZ

Ritual and Reality

February 15 – March 22, 2014

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts presents photographer Yishay Garbasz in her first major New York solo exhibition. Working across themes of memory, history, separation, and healing, Garbasz consistently captures both the pain of injury and the desire for reconciliation through her camera lens. Previous bodies of work exploring her mother's survival of a Holocaust death march and Garbasz's own personal journey with gender identity exemplify this dichotomy of pain and beauty. Physical location, and the inextricable link to the events that take place there, plays a large role in Garbasz's interests. She focuses on places that have been forgotten or abandoned and where the physical signs of pain are obscured.

In *Ritual and Reality*, we join Garbasz on her journey through Japan's Fukushima Prefecture, where on March 11, 2011, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant was hit by a tsunami triggered by the Tohoku earthquake. The resulting catastrophic failure has become the largest nuclear incident since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Garbasz's investigation into Fukushima continues her life-long quest to explore and document spaces that have gone through a serious trauma.

Over the course of three weeks, donning protective gear and a Geiger counter, Garbasz travelled the Fukushima Prefecture, predominantly on foot, photographing the abandoned towns that have been taken back by nature because humans have rendered them uninhabitable. By walking and documenting the actual landscape of this disaster, Garbasz makes visible all that was lost. An area that was once home to a population of roughly two million has been turned into a collection of ghost towns by a disaster that was largely preventable. Years of corporate and governmental cronyism led to ineffective and toothless regulatory bodies incapable or unwilling to deal with the dangers staring directly at them. It's no surprise that the clean-up effort has also been marred by disinformation, ineptitude, and corruption. Her eerily beautiful videos, photographs, and audio recordings of the Exclusion Zone echo with a sense of loneliness and pain. The videos, which should be filled with the sounds of children going to school and adults commuting to work, are permeated only by the sounds of rustling winds, the occasional meowing of a stray cat, and the incessant beeping of a Geiger counter alerting us to the danger that will linger for decades.

Also on display will be photographs depicting the "temporary" housing that evacuees must now call home, as well as a series of images from Tokyo, the world's largest metropolitan area which lies but 150 miles south west of Fukushima. One of Garbasz's goals for this project is to highlight the human disaster that is taking place in Japan alongside the environmental one. Through her work Garbasz exposes the cultural attitudes that allowed this disaster to occur in the wake of a highly predictable natural catastrophe. As she sees it, the Fukushima disaster is rooted in many facets of the Japanese culture, as well as common behaviors in the nuclear industry worldwide, and she believes that the healing process must begin deep within the society that allowed these events to transpire. No longer can people afford to take comfort in what Garbasz keenly identifies as the ritual of safety, but they must now face the very real dangers and obstacles before them. The old status quo of denial and quick fixes will no longer suffice. One only has to look at the landscape, and the large piles of leaking bags containing radioactive materials, to understand that.

A press kit with more information can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1dSKNtF>

Reception: Saturday, February 15, 6-8. Gallery hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 10-6. Monday by appointment. For more information, contact Varvara Mikushkina at (212) 226-3232 or varvara@feldmangallery.com.

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