A Klee painting named ‘Angelus Novus’ shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.¹

Walter Benjamin
A Storm Is Blowing from Paradise
Ori Gersht – Film and Photography

Johannes Janssen

The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. ‘The truth will not run away from us’: in the historical outlook of historicism these words of Gottfried Keller mark the exact point where historical materialism cuts through historicism. For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.⁵

Walter Benjamin

Ori Gersht’s photographs from the series White Noise (1999–2000) seem – in just the way Walter Benjamin described them – like ‘pictures of the past flitting by’ (pp. 49–53). They present momentary glimpses of trees, embankments, houses, snow. In this series of photographs, light and shadow constitute a blurred panorama of landscape. In the way the indistinct motifs flit by and moments are ‘frozen’ by the camera, a perceptible tension is created throughout the entire White Noise series. To the viewer, it suggests the conflict between pausing a moment and allowing oneself to be driven away, or between looking more closely and paying no attention at all. Yet the ‘tone’ of these pictures is initially inviting, harmonious and hushed, in just the way we imagine ‘white noise’: like the muffled sound of footsteps and voices in snow. No shrill colours, no sharply contoured objects thrust themselves blatantly into the foreground. This series seems almost like a dream sequence, or a vague recollection of something from the past that can be seen but not truly grasped. The loneliness of these photographs belies the history of the landscape they picture. Dissonances enter into this picture world only after we learn what a special journey gave rise to the photographs. Ori Gersht was riding a train from Cracow to Auschwitz, and along this old stretch of track he was searching for traces of the inhuman transports of deported Jews to the concentration camp. The photographic records of that search, like all the rest of his work, mean to show how the inconceivable, how the past makes itself felt, and especially how landscape, as a mute reflection of the past, can be reanimated through art and made to speak. Essentially, they explore the relationship between real, visible space and space that is metaphysical, invisible. The term ‘white noise’, adopted as the title of the series, is also
used in engineering and science to indicate glitches in an otherwise ideal model, such as chance disturbances in the transmission of data and signals. And to some extent it is such (visual) disturbances that cause Gersht’s picture space to resonate. For Gersht does not misapply the tools of his profession and his masterly skill as a photographer (and film-maker) simply in order to precisely capture seeming reality; instead, he uses his technical options to produce images of the ‘past flitting by’ in order to present spaces that allow us to capture it associatively and emotionally. Past and present come together in his landscapes. We sense the fate of the deportees, the fate of those people being transported into a future that will mean death, and who – if they could see it at all – perhaps watched the landscape sweeping by while thinking about what had been lost, what lay behind them. Here, Gersht provides moving images of the brief moment when the past ‘flashes up’.

And it becomes clear that Gersht’s work cannot be ‘appreciated’ only in passing, that it does not readily captivate us in its entire significance. We need to register more carefully the context of his motifs, their historical background. It is crucial that we understand where his numerous depictions of landscape were made. His photograph The Mountain, for example (pp. 54/55), in which there appears to be an echo of the tonality of White Noise, belongs to the 2005 photographic series Liquidation. Gersht relates in his book The Clearing that there was a definite personal motivation behind this series. It is dedicated to his father-in-law, Gideon Engler, who as a child in the remote village of Kosów in Poland (now Kosov in Ukraine) was forced to witness horrifying atrocities during the Nazi occupation. He also thanks his wife, who accompanied him on this journey into a ‘dark history’. Part of the photographer’s artistic process is to search out settings of past events, landscapes whose present-day beauty and touristic appeal stand in stark contrast to the events that once took place there. In The Mountain, the title motif and the houses, fences and trees appear distinctly faded, as though emerging from a fog of recollection. What lurks behind this picture? During the Second World War more than 2,000 villagers were led up this hill, flung into a trench and shot or even buried alive. Nothing can be seen of this now, and those who do not know about it would never suspect such a thing. Gersht obscures what is essentially an unspectacular motif through overexposure, and thereby creates a pictorial depth that once again makes room for associations, suspense and emotion. There is something almost mystical about Untitled – End (pp. 56/57), the second photograph in
this series: only the suggestion of the silhouette of a hill or forest seems to blaze a light through the darkness. A flash in the indistinct gloom. Here, the ‘dark history’ Gersht mentions in his dedication to his wife appears to have been vividly captured.

[...] and a faint aroma of mushrooms and moss rose from the unsown earth. The music of peace could be heard in the raindrops falling from leaf to leaf and from the leaves to the ground, as if there were no war, as if the war had never been.  

In The Clearing, Gersht presents the series Liquidation together with stills from his 2005 film The Forest (pp. 58–63), in which he filmed a forested area not far from Kosovo. It is a completely undistorted view into the copse; no overexposure, no blurrings obscure a familiar and seemingly Romantic motif of nature of the sort we know from the works of Caspar David Friedrich. Boughs sway gently in the wind, light breaks softly through the branches, and you can hear occasional birdsongs. This lasts for 45 seconds. Gersht has found himself in a quiet, peaceful spot. No treetops are visible, and no forest floor, only the rhythmic patter of the lower branches – ‘as if there were no war, as if the war had never been’ – which is how Primo Levi describes a forest in his novel If Not Now, When?

And in fact the motif makes us think not only of a romantic idyll, but also of the eerie forest in the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, or most notably of Elias Canetti and his book Crowds and Power, in which he argues that to the Germans the crowd symbol was the army: ‘But the army was more than just the army; it was the marching forest.’ And neither in Levi’s narrative nor in the historical context was this forest merely a timeless idyll. It was rather a place of refuge for the many inhabitants of the surrounding villages who had fled from German soldiers – a refuge, but at the same time a highly dangerous place. There was the constant fear of being discovered and killed. Gersht takes us along into this ‘occupied’ forest with a panning shot across the towering tree trunks, and a nerve-racking thirteen-minute spectacle begins: in a grueling, arrhythmic pattern, an arbitrary sequence, the trees begin to fall, surprisingly quietly or with a frightening crash, either one right after another or only after an extended pause. They have barely fallen out of the picture before they become history – still firmly rooted only a moment ago, now already forgotten. Here, too, one asks oneself, as always when
gazing at ancient trees: 'What have all these mute bystanders witnessed?' With his film about the 'liquidation' of these 'witnesses to time', Gersht projects the horrors of the past into the present with utter immediacy. The forest becomes a virtual battlefield, just as Primo Levi describes it:

A little later they realized that the ground was covered with shreds of bark and bits of leaves and wood: above their heads, the forest seemed brutally pruned, boughs and treetops beheaded as if by the sweep of a gigantic scythe. The farther they advanced, the closer the level of the pruning came to the ground; they saw saplings lopped off at half their height, metal shards and wreckage.

Thanks to the wall-sized projections, but especially the earth-shattering crashes of the falling trees that shake your very bones, you immediately begin to feel what you are watching, so that it is impossible to remain at an objective distance. Gersht breathes into this idyllic natural setting a past that blasts against us – here, too, he has created a metaphysical space out of an actual, present-day forest.

In his later photograph Drape 03 (p. 65), from his 2008 series Hide and Seek, Gersht once again gazes into a forest. But here, he 'veils' the view with a see-through curtain, suggesting an inside and outside. Despite the ludicrous, petit-bourgeois, floral-patterned curtain and despite the playful title of this series, there is no hint of light-heartedness or 'childlike' innocence in these works. Memories of the 2005 psychological thriller Hide and Seek with Robert de Niro – an unnerving, deadly game of hide-and-seek that is staged in all its ramifications – are enough to arouse uneasy feelings. For this photograph, Gersht focused on a historically charged forest – near Sobibor in Poland. In 1943, after a successful uprising against the SS guards at the Sobibor death camp, Jewish prisoners managed to escape into the nearby forest. Eyewitnesses have given vivid accounts of their terrible fears while crossing the open space between the camp and the forest, expecting death at any moment. That space appears to lie between the curtain and the forest, and with this simple caesura Gersht creates an existential space. Like a theatre curtain, this one separates the space of the present-day viewer from the imagined stage on which – always an absurdity – what is past and invented can become 'real'.
The large-format photograph *If Not Now When 02* (pp. 66/67), also from the *Hide and Seek* series, lacks a prop like the curtain to mark off a second picture plane: an extended 'natural stage' lying open before us almost like a textbook composition. A curving, forested lakeshore divides the half-oval zones of sky and water, and the reflection of trees in the water resembles the lashes of a great eye that appears to be gazing into the depths of the serene picture. The slight 'mistiness' of this photograph and its manifold and restrained gradations of colour evoke a contemplative stillness almost reminiscent of an Impressionist landscape painting. It invites meditation. It is said of people who have little to say that 'still waters run deep', and behind this unimposing lake motif there is a depth waiting to be plumbed. For it is, after all, part of the *Hide and Seek* series — the context of which has already been identified in the above discussion of the photograph *Drape 03* — and also bears the title *If Not Now When*, an allusion to the above-mentioned novel in which Primo Levi tells of the epic flight of pursued and homeless people across the countryside, into and out of forests. Levi, in turn, took his title from the Talmud: 'When, if not now, shall we fling the stone at Goliath's brow?' Levi's text describes, like a lesson in resistance from the Talmud, the fugitives' battle with the elements: with cold, rain and wind, with forests and swamps, and with their fear of the soldiers hunting them down to kill them. Like hunted animals pursued by hounds, they faced the greatest risk when crossing a clearing — or a lake. With the help of a forester, Gersht tried to find the settings for Levi's novel, which is based on an authentic report. But they are no longer there, for they were never tagged as historical locations, so here, Gersht reconstructs places that do not actually exist. They are now 'eerily' beautiful landscape panoramas. There is an almost seductive stillness in this (votive) image, an empathic 'visualization' of something that no longer survives, yet calls out to us from the depths of the lake and the forest, in effect taking hold of and moving us.

*Are we not touched by the same breath of air that stroked those who came before? Is there not an echo of those who have been silenced in the voices to which we lend our ears today? [...] Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply.*
In his work Ori Gersht again and again tries to do justice to this claim of the past, and he has unquestionably found a pictorial idiom of his own in which there remains perceptible not only a ‘breath of air that stroked those who came before’, but also the perpetual conflict with our limited abilities to visualize the past with empathy. Fugitives and border crossers personify this conflict, set somewhere between past and future. Gersht also deals with the theme of flight, which is central to the photographs Drape 03 and If Not Now When, in his 2009 film Evaders (pp. 76/77). He shot the film in the Pyrenees, along the legendary Lister Route, which forms the border between France and Spain. In today’s united Europe the route is merely a delightful, scenic path that only symbolically represents the boundary between two countries, but there was a time when it was a boundary between life and death. Any number of noted intellectuals chose it as an escape route from Nazi-occupied France, among them Heinrich and Golo Mann, Franz Werfel and Alma Mahler-Werfel. Also the German philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin, who, having reached the Spanish border town of Portbou in September 1940, committed suicide in his hotel room after being refused entry into Spain and learning that he would be handed back to the French authorities. Gersht’s Evaders is a filmic echo of this specific tale of suffering, but one that resonates far beyond the fate of Benjamin alone.

‘A DP is a displaced person; a refugee, a straggler, a homeless person.’

‘We’re not DPs,’ Line said. ‘We had a homeland, and it’s not our fault if we don’t have one anymore; and we’ll build ourselves another one. It lies before us, not behind.’

Before the ‘displaced person’ makes an appearance in Ori Gersht’s film, we hear a remarkable prologue. The actor Clive Russell, who plays the fugitive, recites Walter Benjamin’s ‘Angelus Novus’ text that is reproduced at the opening of this essay. These iconic lines referring to a Paul Klee watercolour of an angel from 1920 (p. 32) could also be read as a commentary on Gersht’s entire artistic œuvre. A storm is blowing from Paradise and irresistibly propels the angel into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. It is this storm that Gersht evokes when his fugitive is required to struggle incessantly against the power and sounds of the Tramontana, the fierce wind that blows from the other side of the mountains and which is a feature of this section of the Pyrenees. It is a solitary battle against the elements, and in his attempt to cross a border,
fugitive has to effectively ‘transcend his own limitations’. One of Gersht’s concerns was to make certain that his protagonist was not merely acting, to film him in a ‘true’ state of exhaustion. This is apparent in the film, and contributes greatly to the sympathy the viewer feels for the solitary fugitive, despite all the artificiality of the setting. Gersht decisively expands the pictorial and existential space by adding to the projected narrative a parallel set of images. These are shots of winter landscapes, brief flashes of wartime destruction that seem to make visible what the man is thinking, like a landscape of his soul. With this diptych-like arrangement, Gersht pursues a new compositional principle that could be described, in literary terms, as fusing narrative and poetry in a single text. As previously in The Forest, this poetic composition is given an essential dimension with the addition of sound. Accompanying the haunting images, internal and external sounds – heartbeats, wind, breathing, music – merge in an osmotic interplay into a pulsing presence almost impossible to shut out. Will we be able to endure these fourteen oppressive minutes of loneliness, slowness and hopelessness in which not a word is spoken? If we are unable to do so, how sympathetic can we be in the face of present-day refugee dramas in which so many people – lost between yesterday and tomorrow – drown at sea? Gersht frames his dramatic presentation with two interior scenes that serve to exemplify in their stillness the melancholy side of the coin. The ridiculous cheerfulness of the flowered wallpaper underscores the loneliness, the utter forsakeness of the half-naked man seen from the back, seated and bent over on the edge of a hotel-room bed. These are the opening and closing images in the film, creating a loop in which end and beginning merge seamlessly: This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

Out of this complex film project there emerged a photo series of the same name in which the photographs – parallel to the moving sequences of the film – function as votive images. Photographs like Fix in Time or Evaders (pp. 68/69, 72/73) depict the solitary, almost minuscule figure in a striking landscape. Their similarity to paintings of German Romanticism, most notably works by Caspar David Friedrich, is quite obvious. Ori Gersht himself has acknowledged this similarity in a few photographic works. An artist’s book from 2012, produced on the occasion of the exhibition This Storm Is What We Call Progress at the Imperial War Museum in London, contains, among other things, a collage
of Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818) with a photo of prisoners performing in an orchestra at Auschwitz (above). The sounds of the orchestra waft through the mist, hang in the air — and also drift through the jagged mountain landscape of the Pyrenees.

[...] blasted a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method, the lifework is preserved in this work [...] in the lifework the era, and in the era, the entire course of history.⁹

In his film *Evaders*, Ori Gersht focused on a biography from that period in order to bring history to life. He used a different life story in the same way for his 2011 film *Will You Dance for Me* (pp. 79–84). Here, too, before the viewer sees a picture, Gersht begins with a text in which the dancer Yehudit Arnon (1926–2013), speaking off-camera two years before her death, tells of her horrifying experiences as a young woman in the concentration camp at Auschwitz. However, the work was not initially inspired by her report, but by the artist's realization that the tattooed numbers on the forearms of Auschwitz prisoners, seen again and again in public life in Israel, were gradually disappearing — along with the stories of the former camp inmates. Gersht wanted to somehow stem that loss with his art. That is how he came to approach the famous dancer and former artistic director of the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company, who had worked with Pina Bausch, among others. In archaic-sounding Hebrew she intones the prologue to this film, and relates how as a nineteen-year-old she danced for the prisoners at Auschwitz. Then on 23 December 1944, the SS guards wanted Arnon to also dance at their Christmas party. She refused. She was not shot, but as punishment was forced to stand barefoot in the snow. Arnon vowed to devote her life, if she survived, to dance. To some extent this story is the moving motivation, the basis for the film presentation that follows. As in *Evaders*, Gersht expands the picture and existential space with two parallel projections, which sometimes blend into each other. The extraordinary image of the 86-year-old dancer — weakened by age and osteoporosis, but ready for the stage, so to speak, as she sways back and forth in her rocking chair — is profoundly moving. Arnon’s face appears to register her entire career. Her rhythmic rocking in and out of the darkness, together with the parallel projection of a sparse winter landscape, provides a powerful image of the impermanence of life, and at the same time reveals what the dancer must
have remembered of the snow-covered landscape at Auschwitz. These images are accompanied by the vibrant tones of piano and cello music, which, like a fading memory, seem to animate the dancer, who is now almost incapable of movement. The very touching and graceful gesture of her hand as she appears to trace something in the air alongside her head is an impressive moment of both artistic and simply human self-assertion in the face of death: the one she escaped and the one that awaits her. Here, Gersht has snatched from oblivion more than a tattooed number.

To me there is no greater image of the world and of life than a tree. I could meditate next to one every day, next to it and on it [...] 10

A few years before Ori Gersht produced an extraordinary ‘image of the world and of life’ in Israel with his film *Will You Dance for Me*, he photographed an ancient olive grove in the region of Galilee, creating an entirely different set of ‘portraits’. This *Ghost* series (pp. 87–91) combines photographs of individual olive trees taken in 2003 and 2004. These venerable, gnarled and misshapen trees do indeed seem like ghosts captured in the strong light of the midday sun. The photographs also depict the strength and endurance, as well as the vulnerability, of old olive trees, whose wood appears to bear the marks of times past. In their overexposure they seem lost in reverie, detached from time, like yellowed photos in a family album. Olive trees are said to have grown in Israel since the time of the patriarchs: the kings David and Solomon promoted their cultivation. A dove announced the end of the deluge to Noah with an olive branch in its beak, and it was among the olives at Gethsemane that Jesus lingered to converse with God shortly before his arrest and Crucifixion. Jerusalem’s Mount of Olives is of equal importance to Jews, Muslims and Christians, and the conflicts surrounding it are symbolic of the sad and violent history of territorial and ideological struggles between Israelis and Palestinians. Planting, ‘putting down roots’ in this disputed region with its chequered history is always a provocation, one that necessarily involves the ‘uprooting’ or exclusion of others. Gersht turns these time-scarred trees into admonishing spirits, whose shapes and colours have nothing aggressive about them. The cypresses, which Gersht also photographed in Israel (p. 93), make a somewhat different, almost contrary impression. With their tall, pointed, self-contained forms, they seem stronger and more aggressive, almost like rockets ready to be fired. Unlike the olive trees, Gersht photographed these trees in the
evening, some with the halo of the moon behind them. With this nocturnal atmosphere, he also alludes to the symbolism of the cypress, which stands for the underworld, longevity, and has always been associated with death and mourning. Like many evergreens, it is planted in cemeteries – not only in Israel – as a symbol of sorrow. These two ‘tough’ plants – olive trees and cypresses – are juxtaposed as virtual antagonists: firmly rooted and immovable.

Just such a juxtaposition also features in the film First to Laugh (pp. 94–99), from 2013. Once again, as in Hide and Seek, Ori Gersht has chosen the name of a game as his title. It was a game the artist played with Israeli and Palestinian children who attended the same school in Israel. He filmed them, seated across from each other, as they ‘desperately’ tried to maintain composure while forcing those opposite them to lose it – a kind of power play of its own. Although it is not always possible to determine the children’s heritage, he has created a touching portrait gallery of participants who are ‘ingenious’ in the best sense of the word. Their earnest expressions alternate with silliness and concentration, and laughter erupts when it is least expected. The battle is waged by every means possible: one player mimics the act of beheading by drawing his hand across his throat, an irreconcilable gesture that elicits only the same gesture from the other side. The scene neatly evokes the past, the conflict-ridden biographies of the children’s parents and grandparents – also, presumably, the future of these children once they become politically active adults. What will the game look like then? And how will it be played? Are these children being propelled irresistibly into the future while the pile of debris grows skyward? This series of children’s portraits hovers between hope and despair.

In the same year, Ori Gersht continued to play games with his photographic series Love Me Love Me Not (pp. 100/01). This is the game in which one plucks the petals off a flower one by one while alternately chanting ‘He/She loves me’ and ‘He/She loves me not.’ The statement that accompanies the plucking of the last petal represents the ‘truth’. And if the result is unsatisfactory, one proceeds to destroy another flower. In any case, the sacrifice of a flower is required in the pursuit of truth. Gersht alludes to this process in his title, but for his game he employs other materials, namely two fluids of distinct sensuality: ‘maternal,’ nourishing milk, and blood, the sap of life. He lets a few drops of blood fall into the milk, and according to the rules of the game, it is only after the last drop
of blood that the love issue is decided. The game is thus a deadly one. And the exquisite roses that form after the first drop of blood penetrates the milk’s surface like an entry wound last for only a moment. The captivatingly beautiful show ends with the one fluid blending into the other, leaving no sign of the previous splendour. The viewer’s sensual response is rooted in his memory of fairy tales like Snow White, in which the mother, after pricking herself and seeing drops of blood fall into the snow, wishes for a child ‘as white as snow, as red as blood’. One also recalls the line from the folk song ‘The Robber Bride’: ‘she was so beautiful, as beautiful as milk and blood.’ Finally, in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival, the hero, seeing three drops of blood in the snow, is reminded of his beloved, and is temporarily paralysed by melancholy. In the Middle Ages a white face, red cheeks and red lips were considered signs of health and regarded as beautiful. Accordingly, one frequently sees the pairing of a white lily and a red rose as symbols of feminine beauty. With his photographic series featuring milk and blood, Gersht cultivated just such a ‘bouquet’, and at the same time shows how evanescent beauty can be.

Ori Gersht also created an extremely opulent bouquet of flowers and blooms in his most recent film and photo work, On Reflection, from 2014 (pp. 102/03, 110/11). Here, he quotes a floral still life by Jan Brueghel the Elder that he saw (along with two of the painter’s other still lifes) in Vienna’s Kunsthistorisches Museum in 2013. With this motif, Gersht reprises earlier still-life films, for example Big Bang, made in 2006 and shown in our exhibition Still bewegt. That show exhibited Old Master works from the seventeenth century together with contemporary still-life films, exploring within that span of four hundred years ways of depicting transiency, life and death. This ‘arc of suspense’ is already part of Gersht’s still lifes, in which he references masterpieces from the past using the pictorial methods of our own time. The Brueghel still lifes Gersht selected for his On Reflection variants, for example Large Bouquet of Flowers in a Wooden Tub (1606/07; above), seem like the beauty of Creation in microcosm. They are absurd arrangements that ignore both temporal and spatial boundaries. They include flowers that would never blossom at the same time, as well as exotic blooms from different countries and climates. They are wild ‘samplers’ that were not intended to be realistic arrangements, but simply magnificent, while demonstrating Brueghel’s painterly skills. As an artist who, in his works, explores boundaries and the compacting of time and space – and in doing so frequently
uses the overwhelming beauty of natural phenomena as his laboratory – it is only logical that Gersht should view Brueghel’s works with great interest. First of all, he elaborately reconstructs the painter’s composition, which already raises the question of how to define ‘originality’: is his reproduction, even before it is filmed or photographed, just as ‘real’ as the ‘original’ – which is in turn a painterly illusion? His destruction of the reproduction and capturing the violent act on film, in high resolution and slow motion, transfers the true subject matter of the painting — evanescence — into the technological and fast-moving world of today. In his recent work, however, Gersht adds an additional picture level: the mirror image. Here, the motif seen by the viewer is no longer the ‘original reproduction’ but only a reflection of it. The artist thus leads us into a kind of mirrored fun house, and it is no simple matter to orient ourselves inside it. The subsequent demolition of the reflection suddenly produces an initially confusing kaleidoscope of pictorial fragments that are also captured in various stages of destruction in the photographs from the series (pp. 105–09). Moreover, Gersht splits this original moment into two different realities in that he films it with two cameras, one aimed at the glass surface for a close-up, the other at the bouquet’s reflection from ten feet away. Within this labyrinth of space and time the destructive act, the extreme acceleration of transience, is ultimately reversed as the individual pieces fit themselves back together. Presented thus as a perpetuum mobile, *On Reflection* is a work that deals not only with growth and decay, beauty and destruction, and the passage of time, but also with recurring and never static historical processes. With his yearning to linger, to *make whole what has been smashed*, the ‘Angelus Novus’ is here granted only a moment before the storm drives him away and the *pile of debris before him grows skyward.*

2 Ibid., v, 255.
6 Levi (see note 4), 32.
7 Benjamin (see note 1), ii, 254.
8 Levi (see note 4), 355.
9 Benjamin (see note 1), XVII, 263.

*Ori Gersht. Far Off Mountains and Rivers.* 2009, from the photographic series *Eva.* Lightjet print, 152 x 230 cm (diptych).