

# KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

## art ltd.

**CHICAGO: Melanie Schiff: "Sun Land" at Kavi Gupta Gallery**

**James Yood**

**January/February 2013**



"Lemon Tree" 2012 Melanie Schiff . Inkjet on paper mounted and framed 36" x 28 ¾" Edition of 5  
Photo: courtesy Kavi Gupta Gallery

For Chicago artists who make the big move it can be a thousand times more disorienting to relocate to LA than to New York. New York, after all, pretty much resembles Chicago, it's urban, gray, relatively flat, densely packed into a symmetrical grid, same kind of weather, architecture, etc. But LA! Nothing is familiar to Chicagoans there—the air, the light, the crazy zigzag of communities, the sudden canyons and hills, the flora and fauna, even its definitive body of water lays west rather than east.

Melanie Schiff moved from Chicago to LA in 2008, and this exhibition indicated that she's still mulling it over, moving around every day a stranger in a strange land, dealing with what it means to go from flatland to sunland. Because if you're from Chicago you'll never get accustomed to seeing a lemon tree just growing somewhere, and in her almost casual and happenstance photograph *Lemon Tree* (all works 2012), the sudden appearance of a few lemons hanging from a branch seems as bizarre and unexpected to her as if they appeared on the surface of Mars.

Schiff's photographs here are testaments to the visual freshness that only persistent dislocation can provide, and her LA is a gentle conglomeration of modern vernacular architecture, odd and vacated landscapes of canyons and firs, a few human structures temporarily abandoned (there's not a single Los Angeleno—or anyone else—in any of her photographs) all represented in that slightly solarized SoCal light that looks more Kodak than Kodak. *Clay Birds* takes us to a spot on the periphery of the city, to one of those gullies amidst the hills snaking in and around LA, this one where target shooters slaughter thousands of clay birds. Absent now, these sportsmen and women leave nothing but scattered spent shells and a crimson stain on the arid hill opposite where the red dust of this pseudo-carnage coats the sandy soil. Schiff is there to shoot too, and is similarly not visible, but her camera catches above all the searing, almost blinding LA light that somehow everywhere abides there. LA is a city and a culture, but it is foremost a place, a landscape, and Schiff here reconnoiters milieus that will probably always remain home and not home to her.

TEL 212-352-9700 FAX 212-352-9704

[www.katewerblegallery.com](http://www.katewerblegallery.com) EMAIL [info@katewerblegallery.com](mailto:info@katewerblegallery.com)