



Yigal Ozeri. «Genesis» (série). «Untitled, Priscilla on Horseback», 2007.
Huile sur papier. 86 x 120 cm. Oil on paper

Yigal Ozeri moved from Tel Aviv to New York almost twenty years ago and has slowly been making his way to stardom, especially over the past five years. In the eighties he was painting architectural interiors and furniture in a loose expressionist style. After much experimentation in the nineties, he gradually shifted his attention to allegorical portraits, first dealing with people in the urban environment and now in the wilderness. Ozeri focused the whole of his recent exhibition, *Genesis*, on a single model – a young woman named Priscilla who lives in the wilderness of northern Maine, who was raised there with her hippie parents.

Ozeri has been extremely dedicated to this project. Initially he met and spoke with Priscilla at length before proceeding to photograph her in the natural environment. Upon returning to New York, he hired a team of academic portrait artists to methodically paint the selected images of Priscilla that the artist had photographed in the woods of Maine. By coincidence, one of Ozeri's favorite paintings, often compared to those of Priscilla, is that of Ophelia by the nineteenth century Pre-Raphaelite artist John Everett Millais. Ozeri wanted to transform Millais's macabre fantasy into a life-giving portrait of

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Mike Weiss Gallery

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erotic ecstasy and fertile abundance. Other literary and mythological references come to mind, such as Persephone, who represents the cycle of fertility in nature (a subject also painted by Pollock in the early forties) and the hunter-goddess Artemis. Ozeri was particularly keen on the latter reference as he saw in Priscilla "the modern Artemis."

A larger issue that echoes throughout the art world at this moment is a renewed concern for nature and the environment, in some ways a return to the eco-feminism of the seventies. Ozeri choreographed these paintings of Priscilla in order to full capture every detail of his subject's face, the tone of her flesh, the color of her eyes, the shape of her mouth, the dreadlocks of hair as they wind between the thick forest branches. Through Ozeri, Priscilla becomes the virtual identification of a sign for renewal. Inherent in *Genesis* is a longing to reach beyond the deep irony of the present into a romantic core for survival, as if the meaning of survival itself lay beyond any philosophical notion of existence deprived of nature, fertility, and Eros.

Robert C. Morgan