

Yishay Garbasz: 'Ritual and Reality'

MARCH 6, 2014



Video image of a roadblock near the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan, in Yishay Garbasz's show at Ronald Feldman. Credit: Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York

Art in Review

By KEN JOHNSON

*Ronald Feldman Fine Arts
31 Mercer Street
SoHo
Through March 22*

It was almost three years ago, on March 11, 2011, that a tsunami hit the nuclear power plant in Fukushima, Japan, causing the world's worst nuclear accident since the Chernobyl disaster of 1986. Afterward, about 80,000 people living closest to the plant were evacuated, leaving a toxic no man's land. This is the subject of [Yishay Garbasz's videos and photographs](#), which she made during a three-week tour of the so-called "[exclusion zone](#)" in 2013.

Ms. Garbasz's five eerily matter-of-fact videos depict intersections in abandoned towns and a country road with the power plant visible in the distance. Each is a single nine-to-12-minute take. Only blinking overhead traffic lights, the swaying of windblown shrubbery and an occasional passing truck tell you that these are actually moving images. The incessant beeping you hear is the sound of Ms. Garbasz's personal Geiger counter registering ambient radiation.

The large color photographs in a separate gallery resemble images you can see online by lots of other photographers who were drawn to the exclusion zone. They document temporary housing for evacuees, stacks of radioactive dirt in plastic bags, a ruined greenhouse and other signs of life interrupted.

Because Ms. Garbasz's works are so understated, the enormity of what they represent may be lost on casual viewers. It's essential that you use the gallery-provided headphones and audio guide, in which you hear the artist describing her experience as well as the broader ongoing story of the disaster's [aftermath](#). Her engaging, meditative voice sounds a lot like [Werner Herzog's](#), and what she says is profoundly sobering.

A version of this review appears in print on March 7, 2014, on page C30 of the New York edition with the headline: Yishay Garbasz: 'Ritual and Reality'.