

ARTnews

NOVEMBER 2006

Aaron Rothman

Gitterman

In the 14 remarkable works exhibited to striking advantage in this town-house gallery, the young photographer Aaron Rothman displayed the confidence of an artist far more mature. Rothman produced all the prints himself. The color pictures were pigment-ink prints and the black-and-whites were gelatin-silver prints.

Following in the footsteps of photographers of the American West like Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, Rothman succeeded in finding something fresh and exhilarating to say about mountains and deserts. In black and white or in muted color, he delved below the surface beauty to establish a more primitive and visceral understanding of these places, so often subjected to clichéd treatment.

Rather than admiring a forest or rocky outcrop from a distance, Rothman plunges into a scene, allowing viewers to sense the heat of the sun and the smell of pines. Nature, in Rothman's pictures, is active, and at times even smoldering and fearsome.

But these photographs do not relinquish their secrets easily. *Rain* (2005), for instance, shows a hill of rust-colored stones with mere traces of water on their surface. When closely observed, however, the stones appear as various miniature sculptures. As for the rain, Rothman eschews the big, powerful cloudburst in favor of a few drops on parched land—but how keenly we feel their wetness.

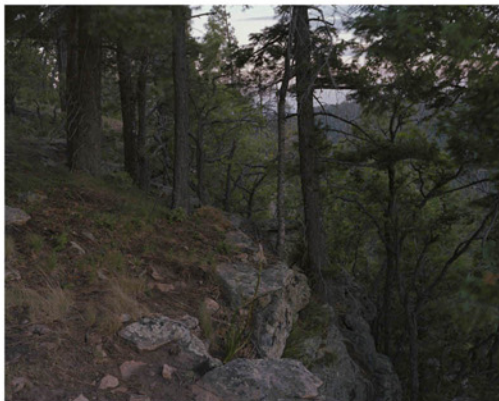
Rothman's tight focus breaks down the separation between viewer and subject. In *Evergreen* (2004), he penetrates to the center of a massive tree, ignoring the trunk and the tops of its branches. While we are accustomed to seeing such a tree photographed from a distance, we find it exciting—and disturbing—to become enmeshed in one. —Valerie Gladstone



Aaron Rothman, *Rain*, 2005 pigment ink print, 30" x 37 1/2".
Gitterman.



Aaron Rothman, *Evergreen*, 2005 pigment ink print, 30" x 37 1/2".
Gitterman.



Aaron Rothman, *Rim*, 2005 pigment ink print, 25 1/2" x 32".
Gitterman.