

PMA CLASSROOM
BEST FOR
Grades 9-12

Personal and Collective Memory

Ghost Olive #4 by Ori Gersht



Ghost Olive #4 from the series *Ghost*, 2003

Ori Gersht (Israel, born 1967)

Chromogenic print mounted on aluminum, 47 3/16 x 61 inches

THEMES

- Memory and identity
- Artistic process
- Political History
(Conflict/land disputes)
- The Natural World

Content Areas and Standards Met

What Maine Ed Standards will this lesson meet?

What content areas does this lesson connect to?

WRITING

Composing for Audience and Purpose

3. Routinely produce a variety of clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, audience, and purpose.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Civics & Government: Students draw on concepts from civics and government to understand political systems, power, authority, governance, civic ideals and practices, and the role of citizens in the community, Maine, the United States, and the world

History: Students draw on concepts and processes using primary and secondary sources from history to develop historical perspective and understand issues of continuity and change in the community, Maine, the United States, and world.

VISUAL ARTS

A1. Artist's Purpose

Students research and explain how art and artists reflect and influence culture and periods of time.

A2. Elements of Art and Principles of Design

Students evaluate all the features of composition.

A3. Media, Tools, Techniques, and Processes

Students compare the effects of media and their associated tools, techniques, and processes, using elements, principles, and expressive qualities in art forms and genres.

D1. Aesthetics and Criticism

Students analyze and evaluate art forms.

E1. The Arts and History and World Cultures

Students analyze the characteristics and purposes of products of the visual/performing arts to understand history and/or world cultures.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness: Linking thoughts and feelings, Identify and recognize emotions, Integrating personal and social identities

Social awareness: Perspective taking, empathy, respect for others

Relationship skills: Communication and active listening

Responsible decision-making: Reflecting

Objective

What will students do/experience/think about, etc?

What is the overall goal of the lesson plan?:

Students will understand how personal memories and identities tie into national histories

Students will understand how our personal experiences and memories influence the way we view the world

Essential Question

What is the big question that this lesson plan seeks to explore or have students grapple with?

How do we preserve and document history and memory?

What is the role of the artist in documenting and preserving history and memory?

How do we capture memories of the land and the history of a place?



Ori Gersht (Israel, born 1967)

Ghost Olive #4, 2003

Chromogenic print mounted on aluminum, 47 3/16 x 61 inches.

Gift of Tina Petra, 2019.30. © Ori Gersht. Image courtesy of Luc Demers

Materials Needed

- Paper
- Pencil or other writing utensil
- Access to the artwork (See previous page or visit collections.portlandmuseum.org)

Instructions:

Look

Start just by looking silently at this image. Take about a minute to really look – notice the big picture, look at the little details. Explore the composition noticing the visual elements: line, shape, texture, form, and color.

Respond

Think about and respond to these questions:

- What is the first word that comes to mind when I look at this image? Write that word down.
- What am I seeing? What seems to be happening in this image?
- What details do I notice?
- How would I describe the colors? The lines?
- How would I describe the mood of this artwork? What emotions is this image bringing up?
- The title is Ghost Olive #4, how do you see Gersht presenting this scene in a “ghostly” way?
- Does this image remind you of anything?

Write your responses down using your paper and writing utensil, share them with someone in your house, or discuss.

Learn

Use this section to learn more about the artist, the process, and the subject.

Ori Gersht's process for creating his photographs explores the relationship between landscape, memory, and history. Gersht created a whole series featuring olive trees photographed in the Galilee region in northern Israel, and *Ghost Olive #4* belongs to this series. These olive trees are centuries old and have survived through so much history – war, peace, land disputes, the current conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, and much more. Olive trees are a worldwide symbol of peace. For Palestinians, olive trees symbolize persistence and are deeply valued for their ability to thrive for thousands of years all while continuing to produce olives. The memories of these ancient trees must be filled with moments of peace and violence.

Gersht attempts to capture the history and memory of the land surrounding these olive trees through his photographic process. Gersht took the photographs in high levels of sun and intentionally overexposed the film, meaning he let the film experience more light than it should have. The intense light on the photographic film results in an overexposed, or washed out and faded, quality. When Gersht returned to the dark room, the space for processing film photographs, he tried to bring back many of the details that were lost in the overexposed film. This process of developing overexposed film to rescue the faded details creates a soft, delicate, and fragile appearance—an almost ghostly quality.

For Gersht, the photographic process is a metaphor for the fading presence of the trees in their war-torn land and the tragic consequences of Israeli-Palestinian territorial disputes. And yet, through all the man-made conflict, nature and land survives.

“If you go to a place where you know something significant happened, that affects your experience. There is something about the landscape, as if the space is radiating something. With photography, what interests me is that the camera is very good at showing the here and now and then turning it into a historical memory...One of my interests is how you can go to a landscape and capture, bring to life, something that is already gone by the time the viewer sees it; it’s a seemingly impossible feat. I am interested in this tension and impossibility.”
—Ori Gersht



Photo courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Act

Imagine you could walk into this scene with the olive tree. What would your experience be like?

What would you see?

What could you hear?

What could you smell?

What might you taste?

What would you feel, either through touch or emotion?

Is the air warm or cold?

Write down your answers.

As you explore this image through your senses, do any memories come up for you? Does this image remind you of anything in your history/past? A memory could be something related to what you are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or feeling – maybe a time when you felt extreme heat or a very sunny day.

If this image isn't bringing any memories up, think about a memory you have in nature somewhere – your favorite place to be outside. It can be anywhere in the world that you have been. Find a picture, either online or somewhere on your phone or in a photo album, and use that as reference. Recall the sensory details of your memory of being outside (what do you see, hear, smell, taste, feel?) and write them down.

If you were to share this image with someone else what might that person be able to deduce about you based on this image?

Whether you have a memory tied to *Ghost Olive #4*, or to another scene in nature, look at the words you wrote down as you did your sensory exploration of what you saw, heard, smelled, tasted, and felt. Start elaborating or adding to those words to make sentences.

Write about this memory using exactly 100 words! This type of writing is called a “drabble”. A drabble is usually a work of fiction, however we will use it to retell a memory. Here we will use the drabble to limit our words and to recount only what is necessary to our memories. To start, you can write as many sentences and words as you can think of, and then start editing your words down until you have only 100 words.

Reflect and Share

Think about your initial response to the overall mood or feeling you get from this artwork. Revisit that first word that came to your mind that you wrote down in the RESPOND section.

Write down a word that now comes to your mind after you've explored more about Gersht's photographic process and the meaning behind the olive tree. How does this word compare with the word you wrote down originally in the RESPOND section? Are they similar or different?

How did the information you learned change your perspective of the artwork? What about this artwork will you store in your memory?

The last step in interacting with art is to share your experience with others. Share your writing with the PMA! Or, share your writing with others in your home or class.

Resources

www.thegundgallery.org/2013/02/ghost-olive-olive-4-mark-01-from-the-series-cypresses/

www.origersht.com/copy-of-ghost-olive-2003-04

grassrootsonline.org/what-we-do/publications-and-resources/fact-sheets-reports/stolen-harvest-occupation-and-palestinian-olive-trees/

museemagazine.com/culture/art-2/features/interview-with-ori-gersht

onlineonly.christies.com/s/post-war-contemporary-art-online/ghost-olive-no-3-11/20606#:~:text=Executed%20in%202003%2C%20Ghost%2DOlive,in%20the%20midday%20Mediterranean%20sun.

huxleyparlour.com/artists/ori-gersht/



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