

JAMES HARRIS GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

Amir Zaki: *At What Point is the Wax no Longer Wax?*

May 3 - June 2, 2007

Reception: Thursday, May 3rd, 6 – 8 PM



James Harris gallery is pleased to present Amir Zaki's newest series *At What Point is the Wax no Longer Wax?* With this group of photographs Zaki continues his exploration of the landscape in Southern California, but in this series the focus of the investigation turns away from the architectural elements of the built environment to the natural. In each image desolate shrubbery, like dying trees and tangled bushes, are boldly isolated against darkened landscapes.

This shift however is in keeping with Zaki's previous bodies of work because the "natural" elements in the photographs evoke artifice. Each tree or stump was chosen specifically because of its odd, ironically 'artificial' and inconsistent presence. In some images, the trees take on an anthropomorphic character: a spindly, silver tree reaches out into a black sky. At its roots, a pile of chopped up timber forebodes its fate. In others, it's not clear whether the photographs are of natural things at all; a traffic cone rests atop a short stump. The grass in which the tree is rooted ends abruptly where the yard meets the street. In an image like this, it's not clear if the landscape we're looking at is real, or a digitally altered image of movie props.

This ambiguity is a fundamental aspect of *At What Point is the Wax no Longer Wax?* Using Descartes' famous *Meditation #2* as a point of departure, Zaki is photographing how malleable our understanding of an object is. Like a piece of wax, the trees and stumps in this series are not stable or iconic. They are recorded and depicted in between stasis, in a kind of mutant state, between solid and liquid, between natural and artificial, between ugly and beautiful, between tree and stump, and of course, ultimately between life and death.

Amir Zaki was recently included in the 2006 California Biennial and also featured in Phaidon Press' acclaimed book *Vitamin Ph: New Perspectives in Photography*.

Gallery hours are Wed. - Sat. 11:00am - 5:00pm & Tues. by appointment
Additional images are available upon request