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Review: Gilad Efrat – Negev

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In his latest exhibition at Inman Gallery, Israeli artist Gilad Efrat ruminates on the desert landscape of his childhood: the Negev which stretches along the southern triangular tip of Israel and is in many ways the proverbial no-man's land. Working from photographic material, including images he shot on his own travels, Efrat captures the static timelessness of the desert.

Following a complex process, Efrat suffuses the composition with a silent, hazy quality. Beginning with lighter colors, Efrat builds up the canvas with thin layers of paint, adding darker layers over time. Efrat uses a rag to remove the outer layers and reveal the strata of brighter colors beneath, subtracting and rubbing the layers together to create a blurred field. The closely cropped tamarisk studies reveal the sensual complexity of Efrat's process of application and removal—the stalks themselves deep incisions in the paint layers.



Efrat's landscapes are far from pastoral. They are uncertain and eerily quiet. Irreducibly flat and lacking perspectival structure—indeed, Efrat has abandoned the traditional anchor of the landscape genre, the horizon line. There is a paradoxical quality to these landscapes. They are emptied out, devoid of discernible details to situate oneself in time or place, at the same time that they present a sense of perceptual overload.

His desert landscapes, populated by bands of salt cedars or remnants of Bedouin settlements, stretch on indefinitely and offer the viewer no clear position. Within certain canvases, the vantage point shifts from the ichnographic desert to moments of scenographic description. This is not a unified space of order but an accumulation of unresolved moments and varied points of view. This optical vacillation is smartly taken up in the exhibition's installation where Efrat has paired desert panoramas with detailed tamarisk studies, the viewer moving from canvas to canvas literalizing visual flux.

— **ELLIOTT ZOOEY MARTIN**

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Gilad Efrat – Tamarisk (Negev), © 2012.
Oil on linen 43-1/2 x 43-1/2 inches.
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