



Yoram Vidal

[*From the series Layers 2002- 2005.*](#)

Professional Color Print

70x70cm, 2005

Many painters use a stooping gesture to serve as a sort of frame. For instance, both one of [Cézanne's Bathers](#) and [Caravaggio's Death of the Virgin](#) and put an emphasis on "the opening of the curtain". In other words, these paintings are more than a theatrical performance with an insignificant, "transparent" curtain. The curtain itself is part of the show.

In the paintings of Cézanne and Caravaggio, the curtain opens to reveal a human scene. But those curtains are not merely an extension of the frame. They serve as an important link to the heart of the picture: Caravaggio's red drape bends down to mourn Mary, who is similarly dressed in red. The curtain is transformed into a kind of "spirit moving upon" the heads of the mourners. In Cézanne's painting, the metaphorical curtain of trees holds a dialogue not unlike that of the women depicted in the picture. However, whereas in Caravaggio's and Cezanne's paintings the "curtain" points toward something more significant, in Yoram Vidal's photograph the open "curtain" is the main motif.

Put simply, this photograph depicts a gateway in a place where nothing worth another glance is supposed to exist. Art has a way of noticing ordinary things. Caravaggio painted mourning saints, but he also noted how much they resembled ordinary people. The women Cézanne drew were not particularly pretty. Vidal photographs "nothing" and discovers in it both the feminine sensuality of Cézanne and the dramatic

holiness of Caravaggio.

There is more to that picture than meets the eye. Those two trees are not just standing there; they are yearning for each other, fulfilling their desire to merge. The implied eroticism among the three women in Cézanne's painting extends to what is going on above their heads among the trees. One can see the same erotic aspect implied in Vidal's photograph. What is the outcome of this eroticism? Looking at the picture as an abstract system of colors will reveal the easy passage of green and brown from the ground to the trees, or vice versa.

One touching moment in the photograph brings to mind the downward movement of the fabric in Caravaggio's painting. In the exact middle of the photo there is a dry branch extended towards the ground. This is the meeting point of two realms: those of the trees and of the ground. Is something being sent down from above or is it the other way round? The photograph has witnessed and captured this exchange between above and below. This is the moment of communication, of passage, the moment when contact is possible. Therefore, it is also the moment inviting the viewer into the picture.

There is something else beyond the "gate". It is the path, which teaches us something about ourselves. We must enter this pathway with humility, with our heads bent. We cannot know where the path leads, but it certainly leads out of the picture, somewhere far beyond. The photograph manages to show what lies beyond by means of what it contains.

By Dror Burstein