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Night (2007) 60 x 78 inches. Oil on canvas.



Winkleman Gallery, through Mar 15

Joy Garnett's exhibition consists of four large paintings: an urban vista in early morning, an explosion caught at midday, a seascape at dusk and a burning structure at night. Although these scenes look like they could be representing imaginary places, they are in fact based on news photos from the Internet. By charging her source material with Munch-like painterly intensity, the artist transforms impersonal images that ordinarily warrant a passing glance into scenes that rivet the eye.

The results throw into sharp relief the vast differences in "speed" between painting and photography: Between the time it takes to snap a picture and create a canvas, and the degree of contemplation required for looking at art as opposed to perusing pictures on the Web.

In *Noon*, a rainbow of colors explodes from some unnamed site, and indeed whatever events led to the violence in this image could have taken place almost anywhere at any time. Similarly, *Night* uses a simple palette of red, black and white to depict the smoldering aftermath of 9/11, but despite Garnett's evocation of glowing flames and structural remnants, one wouldn't necessarily know that this is the World Trade Center. In her hands, a pervasively familiar yet traumatic event becomes strangely anonymous.

Reducing complex events to fleeting impressions can run the risk of trivializing them. Yet by memorializing images like these, which have been the focus of global media attention, Garnett makes them symbolic -- and gives them a history outside of current events.

-- *Jennifer Coates*