

TimeOut

New York

Issue 576: October 12-18, 2006

Ken Gonzales-Day



Cue Art Foundation, through Sat 14
(see Chelsea)

The centerpiece of Ken Gonzales-Day's exhibition, a large black-and-white photomural of a lynching, depicts a crowd of men in Depression-era suits and hats around a bare tree. But the object of their attention is missing: The artist has digitally removed the victim from the picture. Small, vintage-looking images, grouped together on an adjacent wall, show similar clusters of people around empty trees or poles; among them are several that portray the same crowd-or parts of it-as the photomural. In the postcard-sized *Tucson*, a group of steely-eyed men form a V at the base of a telegraph pole and stare directly at the viewer, though whether their gaze is conspiratorial or confrontational is hard to gauge. The titles of two large color photographs of trees—*Golden Chain*, bathed in a late afternoon glow, and *At Daylight the Miserable Man Was Carried to an Oak*, its subject carpeted by moss-suggest that bodies might have once dangled from their branches.

Gonzales-Day's work centers on lynching in the American West, particularly California, where more Latinos, Indians, Chinese and even whites were murdered than blacks. But by erasing the bodies of the lynched victims, inflating the crowd in the mural with a composite of several photos and giving images titles to which they might not be connected (*Tucson*, for example, actually depicts the town of Tombstone, Arizona), the artist renders his "evidence" unreliable and challenges conventional ideas about history, photography and representation itself. Instead of shock, sympathy or identification, we feel a vague unease, without emotional or intellectual resolution.

—Joseph R. Wolin

Art