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AROUND THE GALLERIES
Yishai Jusidman at Angstrom Gallery

By David Pagel
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A carton of milk's shelf life is pretty specific: Just read the label and you'll know, within days, when it's time to pour the contents down the drain. News and art also go sour, but it's significantly more difficult to predict when these vital cultural products are past their prime, no longer useful and ready to be tossed.

At the Angstrom Gallery, **Yishai Jusidman's** 14 oils on panel invite visitors to consider the differences and similarities between art and news, particularly in terms of the way each inhabits time. It's a terrifically unsentimental show that zeros in on the transience of all things and the importance of hanging on to whatever you value most, despite what others think.

Each of Jusidman's paintings measures 28 1/2 inches by 30 1/2 inches and is framed by a gilded rectangle of gold. Each is painted in the manner of the Old Masters. Layer upon layer of patiently built-up colors gradually add up to images rich in detail and thick with the atmosphere of reality: indescribably subtle shifts in tint, beautifully nuanced shadows and the suggestion of three-dimensional space and bodily volume that is always a pleasure to behold.

Jusidman's palette is contemporary, filled with synthetic blends and artificial accents. Yet it's also classic, softened and complicated by the prevalence of such organic colors as earthy browns, hazy grays and smoggy yellows. It almost seems as if you're looking at

his handsomely crafted pictures through smudged lenses. Or that the carefully varnished panels have been around so long that they have suffered the same fate as old news- print - darkening, getting brittle and beginning to disintegrate.

Jusidman has based each of his images on the thumbnail photographs in the World This Week section of the Economist magazine. Some are portraits, including of Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (looking exhausted), Tony Blair (looking flummoxed), a coal miner (looking heroic) and a young protester (exuding righteous defiance).

Other paintings depict the victims of deliberate and accidental violence, refugees and immigrants, modern pirates, historical reenactments, moments of urban leisure and an instance of America's epidemic obesity.

No wall labels, captions or printed messages link any of the paintings to precise times or places. Although it's easy to recall the stories that accompany some, other events have already faded into obscurity. The subjects of most come somewhere in between, with the general outline of the story still available to memory even if most of the details have been lost.

Jusidman has been working on the ongoing series "The Economist Shuffle" for more than three years. Although it's haunting to witness once-gripping headlines drift into oblivion, it's even more sobering to think that the pace of painting is not all that different from that of the news -- slower, certainly, but no real match for the inhuman sweep of history. News stories and paintings both disappear from history unless they capture so much that is so significant to so many that they become mythical or legendary, so interwoven with the social fabric that they change the world.

That's a tall order for a painting. But it's one Jusidman confronts head-on in his exhibition, his first solo show in Los Angeles since a 1996 survey at Otis College of Art and Design.

Angstrom Gallery, 2622 S. La Cienega Blvd., L.A., (310) 204-3334, through Dec. 23. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.angstromgallery.com.

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