

Images from above encourage viewers to look within

By Cate McQuaid

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Aerial photographer David Maisel shows us landscapes we cannot see from our vantage point on earth. They're humbling in the same way as gazing at a night sky and recognizing the vastness of the universe. In Maisel's case, some of the strange and disturbing images he portrays are wrought by humanity, and he's asking us to sit up and take notice.

Galleries

The images in his series, "Terminal Mirage," at Miller Block Gallery, are subtler than a call to arms, and quite beautiful. Not all of the strangeness is man-made; some is just the natural evolution of the earth. For "Terminal Mirage," Maisel flew over the Great Salt Lake in a small plane, leaned out the window, and clicked away. The resulting photographs are uncropped, and unmanipulated, yet anyone would be hard put to identify these as pictures of a lake.

The Great Salt Lake has been crosscut over the years by channels built to harvest minerals. In Maisel's images, they delineate a grid that references Modernist

David Maisel: Terminal Mirage
and **John Tracey: Recent Work**

At: Miller Block Gallery, 14 Newbury St.,
through Oct. 18. 617-536-4650,
www.millerblockgallery.com

painting. They also break up the mineral content of the lake, so that each square is like a differently colored pane of glass. Not all sources of tone are natural: the reds, greens, and golds also come from toxins.

Also man-made is environmental artist Robert Smithson's iconographic "Spiral Jetty," which was submerged until recently, and in one of Maisel's images rises up as a little white salt-encrusted curl in a placid sea of red.

Each photo offers levels of looking: water may be green, but it reflects a blue, cloud-scudded sky, and rocks or tiny pieces of land break the surface. Maisel's work is so rich with visual information that at some point you have to stop trying to make sense of it and just succumb to its glassy loveliness.

