



Oblivion 1382-52p

Photograph by David Maisel

2004

There's nothing like a good education to give you a unique perspective on the world. David Maisel graduated from Princeton summa cum laude in 1984, so it's not surprising that his work is brainy. He's aware that we live in a time when the economies are global, ideologies are not just political but geopolitical, science can look back beyond Noah's ark to the Big Bang, and nature itself is in danger of being extinguished.

It's also true that "eye in the sky" satellites are keeping a close watch on us all the time. This photograph might be taken for a digital enhancement of such surveillance,

but in fact, it's a low-tech image, though made from a high altitude. Maisel wants to disconcert us, but his interest is in the metaphorical rather than the actual revelations that his point of view makes possible. He wants his aerial photographs to "create their own cosmologies," not just map objective reality.

His flyover of L.A. has yielded pictures that have this effect. They create a vision of a city more gothic than Gotham. This photograph of tract housing looks like an X-ray of the intestines of a giant beast that has eaten something it shouldn't have and is having trouble digesting it.