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FRIDAY

ART GALLERIES

REVIEW

David Maisel

One of last year's most unforgettable photography books was a collection of aerial photographs by Emmet Gowin. Each of the pictures was of land damaged by various forms of pollution, and they were all as painful as if they had been studies of beaten or scarred bodies.

David Maisel, one of Gowin's students who has an exhibition at the Schneider Gallery, also has taken aerial photographs, of a polluted lake in California. But where Gowin's toned images evoked pain, Maisel's color pictures create an entirely different sensation, one that is cooler and has the formal beauty of painted abstraction.

Shooting land from the air, of course, emphasizes geometric patterns created by blocks of color. But the color in Maisel's images has so unnatural a brilliance that one would swear it has been digitally altered when, in fact, it has not. Everything in the images, no matter how heightened, was recorded actually as it was seen in nature, and that accounts for both its appeal and horror.

Chromatically, these are very intense pictures. However, because they so easily are viewed as pure abstractions, their ecological force registers upon the viewer slowly. That their unnatural color has consequences to the land is the point, despite the images' deceptive beauty. Maisel has photographed sites that do not seem of this world, and no matter how we are seduced by them we have to understand that they are of our own terrible making.

At 230 W. Superior St., through July 19. 312-988-4033.

