

# The New York Times

## Science Events: Quirky Prizes and Inspired Artworks

*The Haines Gallery in San Francisco is featuring an exhibit of David Maisel's photographs of open-pit copper mines, tailings ponds, and cyanide-leaching fields throughout the American West. This piece is entitled *The Mining Project (Clifton Arizona 7)*, 1989*

By JASCHA HOFFMAN

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PHOTOGRAPHY

David Maisel: Mining. Haines Gallery, 49 Geary St., San Francisco. Sept. 5 — Oct. 26. Talk on Sept. 26 at 7 p.m.

David Maisel's aerial photographs reveal the splendor of ecological devastation, capturing the surreal beauty of parched reservoirs and clear-cut forests. His gift for the "apocalyptic sublime," as he calls it, is nowhere more apparent than in the 10 shots of American mines on display in this gallery show. Early airborne shots of quarries in the American Southwest look something like alien lakes. More recent photographs of open-pit mines in Nevada seem a bit more painterly. One photo recalls the delicate terracing the Incas built around Machu Picchu, another a tremendous and menacing Key lime pie. Although many of the vibrant colors are caused by toxic chemicals like mercury and cyanide, Mr. Maisel prefers to leave the

environmental details out of the captions. "I'm not interested in pointing fingers at a particular industry," he said in an interview, but rather inspiring a sort of existential dread. "My feeling is that, if you look at the history of this planet, we are a little flicker, which may be flickering out right now," he said. "I almost feel like an archaeologist, examining the remnants of a civilization that happens to still exist."



David Maisel *The Mining Project (Clifton Arizona 7)*, 1989