

# EDWYNN HOUK GALLERY

## PRESS RELEASE



### **DAVID MAISEL: THE EXPANDED FIELD**

14 OCTOBER – 20 NOVEMBER 2021

Edwynn Houk Gallery is pleased to announce David Maisel's inaugural exhibition, *The Expanded Field*. Over the course of the past three decades, Maisel has concentrated his artist practice on creating large scale aerial photographs depicting sites of environmental transformation throughout the American West, including open pit mining, water reclamation, urban sprawl, and zones of desertification. His most recent series, *Desolation Desert*, has taken him to the copper and lithium mines of Chile's Atacama Desert.

At first glance, viewers are transfixed by the poetic nature of Maisel's seemingly abstract images, some of which could be mistaken for color field paintings. Mineral concentrations in the earth produce an array of stunning saturated hues, and, from thousands of feet in the air, the scars of human intervention into the landscape read as delicately balanced compositions of geometric forms. These otherworldly photographs transport the viewer toward the margins of the unknown, and posit an expanded definition of contemporary landscape. Rather than simply documenting environmental change, Maisel positions his work between the evidentiary and aesthetic functions of photography. The resulting images subvert cartographic mapping, instead occupying a zone that is both imaginative and descriptive, informed by the politics of land use.

In this moment of global reckoning with the environmental consequences of human activity, these photographs are both prescient and timely. Yet, they are also strangely seductive, and Maisel does not shy away from the tension of this duality between acts of destruction and the creation of beauty, offering a contemporary interpretation of the sublime. His images do not seek to explicitly answer the questions they raise, rather they exist as objects of meditation, presenting a view of the world from an unexpected perspective. In Maisel's words, "For me, the photograph must surpass its function as a document. My images of remote mines and mountains are made in order to identify and confront aspects of the landscape that correspond to the structure of human thought and feeling. They are analogues to what we find in ourselves."

David Maisel's photographs and videos have been exhibited worldwide, and are held in over fifty public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the National Gallery of Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Yale University Art Gallery, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. His work has been the subject of seven monographs: *Proving Ground* (Radius Books, 2020); *Mount St. Helens: Afterlife* (Ivorypress, 2018), *Black Maps: American Landscape and the Apocalyptic Sublime* (Steidl, 2013), *History's Shadow* (Nazraeli, 2011), *Library of Dust* (Chronicle, 2008), *Oblivion* (Nazraeli, 2006), and *The Lake Project* (Nazraeli, 2004). He is a 2018 Guggenheim Fellow in the Creative Arts, and has been a Scholar in Residence at the Getty Research Institute (2007), an Artist in Residence at the Headlands Center for the Arts (2008), and the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Center for Cultural Innovation. Maisel received his BA from Princeton University and his MFA from California College of the Arts, in addition to study at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design.