

## ART IN REVIEW

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### **Emmet Gowin**

*Pace Wildenstein MacGill*

*32 East 57th Street*

*Manhattan*

*Through June 13*

Since starting out in the 1960's as a chronicler of domestic intimacy, Emmet Gowin has expanded his horizons. Around 1980 he began photographing landscapes from airplanes, focusing on the more troubling ways that human civilization impresses itself on nature. In images of nuclear-test sites, mines, industrialized farms and missile sites, he combines beauty and the urgency of bearing witness. Whether his pictures are really as morally compelling as they are visually entrancing is a question.

Mr. Gowin's pictures are beautifully printed in black and white, with warm tones added by hand. Images are so rich in detail and atmosphere they are almost like miniature paintings. Some panoramic views call to mind mountainscapes in Renaissance paintings, like those of Albrecht Altdorfer. A golf course under construction becomes a lush Abstract Expressionistic composition of biomorphic shapes, sandy textures and tones of gray. A picture in which the concentric circles of a huge irrigation system inscribe terrain pocked by glacial potholes creates an astonishing wedding of abstraction and Surrealism.

But Mr. Gowin wants to sermonize, too, which he does not only through choices of subject matter but also by manipulating light, perspective and space to create moods of cosmic gloom; you feel as if you're seeing the world through the eyes of a rueful Jehovah. This probably won't convert anyone not already an environmentalist, but it does give the photographs a thrilling visionary resonance. KEN JOHNSON