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VISUAL ART » REVIEW



GARY MICHAEL DAULT
GALLERY GOING

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CHAD GERTH
AT THE CORKIN GALLERY

\$1,100-\$2,100. Until Sept. 14,
55 Mill St., Building 61, Toronto;
416-979-1980

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However dense and choked the contemporary city becomes, grass and weeds prevail. And in most cities, so do vacant lots. For this tiny but exquisite exhibition, Empty Lots, Chicago-based photographer Chad Gerth has photographed his city's vacant spaces from a whole new vantage point.

Inventive photographers have always experimented with odd angles. Great moder-

nist photographers such as Andre Kertesz, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Russian Constructivists El Lissitzky and Aleksandr Rodchenko loved to shoot from above. But not from this far above. Gerth's photographs were taken by a camera mounted on a miniature, radio-controlled helicopter sent up to hover high over the designated spaces.

With what result? Given the fact that Gerth's camera is right above each lot and not just angled over it from an adjacent rooftop, his photographs are all small squares and rectangles. The green grass and the darker greens of trees and the whiteness of the gravel give the photos a painterly effect: They are transformed into small, grid-like pictures that read (you feel almost embarrassed at the frivolity of the pleasure this provides) as abstract events in non-representational painting. It's all too easy to lose your grip on what the photos are actually about: These empty lots exist, as Gerth puts it, "not as places of civic or social importance, but as vacant spaces beyond the control of the city." There's supposed to be poignancy here - not just beauty.