

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

**GALLERY GOING: GARETH LONG AT THE LEO KAMEN GALLERY
GARY MICHAEL DAULT
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Artist Gareth Long, born and raised in Toronto and currently a graduate student in the sculpture program at Yale University in Connecticut, was seven years old in 1986. He remembers coming home from school at lunchtime on Jan. 28 to watch the Challenger launch with his mother. And he remembers feeling, on witnessing the explosion 73 seconds into that fateful flight - which killed all seven astronauts - that he was suddenly engaged in what he calls, in the notes to his new exhibition, titled *it's hard to dazzle us*, a disaster "where the act of watching became part of the event.

Now, 20 years later, he has memorialized the event and the memory of watching it in a series of five impressive, large-scale lenticular photographs. Lenticular technology is that system whereby, at its crudest, a postcard can be tilted two ways so that some comely woman will, say, wink at you. In Long's version - which is infinitely more sophisticated than those postcards- video footage can be processed so that what appears to be a still photograph is in fact a participatory photograph, showing you, as you move in front of it, what happened just before and just after the image you started with.

Lenticular photography, Long notes, "formally connects active viewing to the act of viewing, the self-conscious viewing that is inherent in collective history." And because you can walk against the photograph's grain, as it were, and make it "run" backwards, you can replay a moment endlessly: you can lead up to the Challenger's exploding and then step back and watch it all over again.

This is impressive and disconcerting, too, because the images are both oddly beautiful and massively disturbing. Why should we watch the Challenger explode and reassemble and explode and reassemble~ For the same reason we seem compelled, over and over, to watch the twin towers fall: It's a way of obsessively picking at a scab from the body of history's conventional narrative. **It** makes us feel alive and in control.

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