

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Tue – Sat: 10:30am–7:00pm and by appointment



GREGORY CREWDSON: *Sanctuary*

Thursday, 3 February – Saturday, 5 March 2011

Opening reception for the artist: Thursday, February 3rd, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

In these pictures I draw upon the inherent quietness and uncanny aspects of the empty sets. As with much of my work, I looked at the blurred lines between reality and fiction, nature and artifice, and beauty and decay.

--Gregory Crewdson

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present "Sanctuary," Gregory Crewdson's first exhibition at the Rome gallery.

This new group of forty-one black-and-white photographs is the first work that Crewdson has produced outside the United States, shot on location at the legendary Cinecittà studios on the outskirts of Rome. Digitally photographed and produced with minimal reworking, *Sanctuary* is Crewdson's first black and white series since *Hover* (1996-1997), where he has moved beyond the construction of the surreal human drama that drove previous series to depicting landscapes virtually devoid of human presence. The abandoned outdoor film sets have become the subject of, rather than the mere setting for, his pictures.

Moving through the empty streets of "Ancient Rome" at the beginning and end of the day, he has captured the palpable atmospheres of melancholy lurking at every twist and turn, cloaked in shadow or suddenly illuminated by a shaft of daylight. Although the links to the great chroniclers of urban environments such as Eugène Atget and William Eggleston are evident, Crewdson has added a new layer to the genre by searching for his particular form of *verité* within the artificial leftovers of cinematic reality.

Crewdson's imaginary stems from the impulses that have shaped the surreal visions of American artists from Albert Bierstadt to Stephen Spielberg. In the past he sought particular locations where he could create psychologically charged *tableaux vivants* that conflated empirical observation with artifice, like film stills from films that never existed. These photographs were often the result of weeks of preparation, a method with parallels in film production. In previous series including *Twilight* (1998-2002) and *Beneath the Roses* (2003-2007), feelings of alienation and anxiety, and oddness pervade meticulously staged scenes, exposing the hidden dramas embedded in normative suburban existence.

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In *Sanctuary*, Crewdson's focus on scenographic architecture as the principal subject underscores the illusory techniques that he has previously used to construct his scenes and actions. The series contains certain characteristics of a documentary film by which is exposed the hidden life of movies and their artifacts that remain once production has ceased. In several images the underlying structure of the façades and scaffolding of decaying sets is exposed; in others, period buildings are framed by cobbled streets and open ground now overtaken by grasses and weeds; ruined statues, the odd graffiti on a wall, puddles of rain water, and other detritus further emphasize the eerie absence of life that these images convey, heightened by the ambient light of dawn and dusk. The intimate scale of the black-and-white photographs serves to further intensify the poignancy of each deserted scene.

A fully illustrated catalogue of the complete series with an essay by *The New York Times* film critic A.O. Scott has been published by Abrams. A special boxed and clothbound edition of the book, which includes one of three production stills, each in an edition of 50 signed and numbered by the artist, is available exclusively at Gagolian Gallery.

Gregory Crewdson was born in 1962 in Brooklyn, New York and received a BA at SUNY, Purchase and an MFA at Yale University. His photographs are included in numerous museums and public collections around the world including Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Following the retrospective at Kunstverein Hannover (Germany, 2005, traveled to Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland and the Hasselblad Center, Sweden), the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome opened a major retrospective of his work in 2007. Another traveling exhibition is scheduled to open at the Kulturhuset Museum, Stockholm, in February 2011, followed by Sorte Diamant, Copenhagen and c/o Berlin, Berlin. Crewdson is a faculty member of the Department of Photography at Yale University. He lives in New York City.

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