

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

# TIME

### Discover Gregory Crewdson's New Surreal Photographs

*Fine-Art photographer Gregory Crewdson explores solitude in the woodlands of his hometown*

Rachel Lowry



*Woman at Sink, Cathedral of the Pines Series, 2014  
Gregory Crewdson—Courtesy of The Gagosian*

In 2011, fine-art photographer Gregory Crewdson left New York to live in a solitary church in the Berkshires. Coping with a difficult divorce, he found renewal in daily open-water swims and cross-country skiing on the wooded paths of the Appalachian Trail. There, he stumbled upon a trail called Cathedral of the Pines, which inspired new images.

“It was an aesthetic awakening,” Crewdson tells TIME. “The trail name and the location at that moment sparked the inspiration for an entire body of work.”

The 31-image series is on display at the Gagosian Gallery in New York. Ultimately titled *Cathedral of the Pines*, the cinematic leitmotifs are quintessential Crewdson. Forest clearings, anonymous townscapes and nondescript interiors become elaborately staged, suspenseful images that explore the recesses of the American psyche and the disquieting dramas of American daily life. In one image a couple loiters along a river, small flecks in relation to the towering pines encircling them. In a misty barn, a girl sits perched on a stool, her quizzical brow almost suggesting that she, too, is curious about the floorboards that have been pried free near her feet.

“I am fundamentally interested in the uncanny, which is almost by definition like trying to find an unexpected mystery in everyday life,” says Crewdson. “It’s important to me that the setting for my pictures feels familiar. The settings, the props, the costumes, the subjects, they are

supposed to feel ordinary, but then I use light and color and mood and atmosphere to charge it in some way.”

In his 20 years of production, Crewdson’s images, many of which sell for more than \$100,000, have garnered an international following. Each series — *Twilight*, *Dream House* and *Beneath the Roses* — recalls not only 19th century American and European paintings, but also suggest a cinematic quality that was influenced by his love of vintage films. *Cathedral of the Pines*, however, transcends to a darker psychological place, exploring themes of isolation and longing.

“It was important to me that the pictures have a kind of quiet, still sensibility,” Crewdson says. “To me, they are less cinematic and more painterly, in terms of the approach, but it is definitely still psychological, with very little going on in terms of the literal narrative or storyline.”

His movie-like productions have seen months of advance planning, with Crewdson verifying the placement of each tiny detail, from a wet sponge left on a countertop to a crumpled fleece blanket discarded beside a couch. Shot with large-format cameras, filming requires more than 40 crew members familiar with motion-picture-film equipment and techniques. But Crewdson says *Cathedral of the Pines* presented new challenges.

“We worked in total isolation,” he says. “We had a small crew that worked on all three productions, dealing with unpredictable weather and extreme cold.”

**Gregory Crewdson**’s *Cathedral of the Pines* is on display from Jan. 28 to March 5 at the Gagosian Gallery in New York. The show’s opening reception will be Thursday, Jan. 28, from 6 to 8 p.m.

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