Gregory Crewdson
‘Cathedral of the Pines’
Gagosian Gallery
522 West 21st Street, Chelsea
Through March 5

In the catalog for his latest show, “Cathedral of the Pines,” the photographer Gregory Crewdson is candid about losing his way as an artist and finding it again. In a statement that sounds as if it were lifted from a Robert Frost poem, he writes: “In a forest in Western Massachusetts on a winter’s day, I became aware that the darkness around me was lifting. I felt connected to myself again, felt a desire to make pictures, in a way that felt old and new at the same time. It was a revelation, a rebirth.”

That rebirth is evident in the 31 digital pigment prints in this exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery in Chelsea. While Mr. Crewdson’s characteristic Neo-Surrealism, eeriness and absence of narrative closure are still present, these new works include echoes of other contemporary photographers, like Catherine Opie, Jeff Wall and James Casebere, as well as 19th-century landscape painters such as Thomas Cole and Asher Durand. Nude or half-clothed figures with waxy skin stare off into space, ruminating on trauma and loss. The light is cold and dull; props are slightly antiquated. The landscapes look vaguely unreal.

Mr. Crewdson approaches photography differently from the artists whose haute-post-conceptualism and social-media-obsessed works are on view in several New York museums. He is interested in narrative, story and characters (he once created a promotional image for the television show “Six Feet Under”) rather than apparatus, global identity or image dispersion. With this solo, however, he reclaims his spot as a heavyweight of staged photography and a chronicler of white existentialist angst, marking, just as Cole and Durand did, the passing of time and epochs in American history.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER