

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

ARTFORUM

Gregory Crewdson

Alex Fialho



Gregory Crewdson, Beneath the Bridge, 2014, digital pigment print, 37 1/2 x 50". © Gregory Crewdson. Courtesy Gagolian Gallery.

The photographs in Gregory Crewdson's first solo exhibition in New York City in six years are an extension of his hallmark depictions of eerie encounters in American homes and neighborhoods, yet are set in more rural forest environs than before. Their soft glow results from his large-scale, cinematic-style productions and extensive post-production. Here, Crewdson speaks about working on "Cathedral of the Pines," which will be on view at Gagolian Gallery in New York from January 28 through March 5, 2016.

THIS BODY OF WORK is titled after a trail in the wilderness of Becket, Massachusetts. What caught my eye about Cathedral of the Pines was how beautiful it was and how it reconnected me to my past; it reminded me of my childhood and when I used to cross country ski. There is definitely some spiritual endeavor in the pictures for me—of trying to reconnect with nature and myself. The relationship between solitary figures and nature plays a pivotal role in the pictures.

My axiom is every artist has a story to tell and always winds up being concerned with the same core issue. My intention was to try and make the most enchanting pictures possible but, of course, in the end they also have a sense of sorrow and disconnect. I can't help that. That's what I do. My practice is introverted; not much happens on the surface of things, intentionally. Yet there is always a sense of longing and desire, disconnection and quiet unease.

The pictures also entailed an extended process of post-production. I printed them in my studio and have spent two years in post-production, printing them again and again, painstakingly pushing pixels around until it feels like something nearly transparent and almost naked. The work also has a heightened quality. Everything is hyper-focused and the colors all create a kind of plasticity. You can't really name it. It's just an overall sensibility.

I find my pictures are returning back to the use of color, lighting, and the cinematic approach in my previous series "Beneath The Roses," but in a much quieter way, and only on locations away from urban situations. Unlike my previous output, a hallmark of this new series is that we didn't work on sound stages or on populated streets. The scale is also relatively intimate; they are not enormous pictures, they are more intimate with a lot of bodies and a lot of flesh. I also always work with a team of people, including my longtime director of photography Rick Sands, among others, who are well versed in the conventions of cinematic production. But this time I'm trying to use color and light in a way that feels more painterly than cinematic.

In the end though, it's crucial that these are photographs and not paintings nor movies. My first alliance is to the photograph. Unlike a painting, a photograph will always and forever have that connection to the real. No matter how manicured it is, it's always rooted in a moment that actually occurred—as a trace, a document. I love that photographs have a connection to real life. And, of course, unlike a movie, a picture is frozen and mute and has no beginning and no end. There is a privilege in trying to make that moment as beautiful and extraordinary as possible.