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Gregory Crewdson Imagines Renewal and Redemption in Latest Art Exhibition

The Photographer Speaks with CR About His New Series That Dreams Beyond Its Broken Landscapes Towards a Future of Hope

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© GREGORY CREWDSON. COURTESY GAGOSIAN

Ideas of brokenness and recovery are at the heart of Gregory Crewdson's latest photography exhibition, *An Eclipse of Moths*. Just opened at Gagosian Beverly Hills, Crewdson's new series of postindustrial landscapes echoes his hallmark aesthetic—stillness and undercurrents of discontent. Exactly what is amiss, the particular search and longing, feels just out of reach, yet the photographer's ultimate narrative emphasizes nature and renewal.

Across three decades, Crewdson's artworks, including major series *Twilight*, *Beneath the Roses*, and *Cathedral of the Pines*, imply a sense of wonder and haunt within domestic moments and contemplative figures. His sublime photos reveal unexpected emotional depth in ordinary suburban and small-town scenes. Through a meticulous production process, Crewdson prizes each work's making as much as the result, lending to imagery that is both precise and dreamlike in its final form.



"FUNERARY BACK LOT" BY GREGORY CREWDSON, 2018-19 © GREGORY CREWDSON. COURTESY GAGOSIAN

The Brooklyn-born photographer (b. 1962) was first drawn to the art after seeing a Diane Arbus exhibition at the age of 10. Then, when he took a class with artist Laurie Simmons at SUNY Purchase, Crewdson traded his psychology major for photography, devoting himself to the medium that would become his life's work. He went on to receive an MFA from Yale University, where he now teaches and is director of graduate photography studies.

Crewdson's latest body of work, *An Eclipse of Moths* is a collection of large-scale panoramic photos set in remote Berkshires landscapes. Named for an entomological term referencing moths' flight patterns and light, the images shown—a taxi depot, an abandoned factory, and vacant diners and storefronts—are strangely intimate and somehow universal in their presence. Visual light anchors the settings, while figures and scenes attend to their personal light—ideals of hope, possibility, and the future ahead.

Here, *CR* speaks with the artist about the open allusions within his photos, the place of connection in his work, and why the perfect photograph has no history that comes before or after—only the moment itself.

Across three decades of photography, how would you describe your evolution as an artist?

“Every artist has one central story to tell and you spend your lifetime coming back to that story in different ways. In your 20s, there are artists you love, movies you love, things that inspire you and influence the form and presentation of your work. You spend a lifetime circling back and attempting to reinvent those ideas. You come back to the same quandaries, the same central obsessions, fears, and desires.

In my work, I feel that part of the story should remain unknowable. I have always had an interest in the uncanny—there is a certain mystery and beauty in everyday life. I consider myself to be a storyteller and I always search for meaning, which is usually conducted through light and themes of connection. That is something that runs throughout the work—a kind of disconnection or alienation, lone figures in search of something outside themselves. The act of photography

separates you from the world around you, which is true throughout the history of the medium, so there is always a search for connection within it.”



"THE COBRA" BY GREGORY CREWDSON, 2018-19 © GREGORY CREWDSON. COURTESY GAGOSIAN

Your photos often have a deeper, darker quality beneath the stillness. How do these allusions create meaning in your work?

“All artists build up their own vocabulary and iconography, whether conscious or not. I am very involved in artists who explore the American landscape, as well as other influences such as Alfred Hitchcock, Edward Hopper, David Lynch, and Steven Spielberg. Having many different sources helps you make the work your own. Location too is so important for any photographer and it is essential for my picture-making. I like locations that are slightly outside of time, they could be anywhere or nowhere. There are often nondescript spaces and elements in an ordinary setting. Nothing feels contemporary but it still seems relevant to the moment.”



"RED STAR EXPRESS" BY GREGORY CREWDSON, 2018-19 © GREGORY CREWDSON. COURTESY GAGOSIAN

You have said that in your images, “There are no answers here, only questions.” How do you find the questions to ask and the right moments to visualize them?

“It is all through form, light, and color. I try to take a very unremarkable, ordinary scene and photograph in a way that transforms it and makes it beautiful, new, and mysterious. It is all in the process of making.”

Thinking of your collaboration with Namachekeo for Fall/Winter 2020, why is the idea of connection important in both art and fashion?

“Part of why I was interested in the project is that the fashion world and art world are two separate fields with their own figures—artists, art critics, and collectors versus designers, fashion critics, and buyers. To me, it was really interesting to see how worlds can collide in one way or another. What I like about photography is that it creates connections by nature and this project brings my pictures into a new format. When Dilan [Lurr of Namachekeo] approached me and we agreed to work together, I could not have imagined that we would be in this moment of a global pandemic. Yet the project got me thinking about how art can exist outside of gallery walls, which especially corresponds to the time we find ourselves in now.”



"THE TAXI DEPOT" BY GREGORY CREWDSON, 2018-19 © GREGORY CREWDSON. COURTESY GAGOSIAN

What is most personal and significant to you about An Eclipse of Moths?

“A new body of work is always special. Also, we are in a sort of strange time and I have been very protective of the work. There is the moment when the work becomes public, and it becomes part of the outside world. People see it and respond to it, and it is no longer just yours. What is really interesting is that these pictures were made in 2018, so they had a completely different meaning when I created them than they do now, though somehow they are even more relevant and have that much more meaning in this moment.”

How do you see the broader application of the exhibition's themes and sentiments now?

“I think hope is really important to my work. Mine is not a completely pessimistic view of sadness, disconnect, and brokenness. I would like the beauty, detail, light, and form of the pictures to give us a sense of hope. For example, the ‘Redemption Center’ image is not meant to be ironic. It really suggests some kind of hope and possibility or I wouldn’t be making the

pictures. The task of being an artist is to find order in the chaos, to find the symmetry and sense of meaning in the world.”