



MADISON











Gregory Crewdson

Edited by Walter Moser

Texts by David Fincher, Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, Beate Hofstadler, Astrid Mahler,
Walter Moser, Matthieu Orléan, Emily St. John Mandel

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Foreword

For a photographer who likes to describe himself as a realist, the powerful imagery of Gregory Crewdson's work is astounding. In impressive large formats and brilliantly colored, with every detail carefully deliberated over, his images are the result of deep and nuanced consideration. After extensive preparation, Crewdson stages his photographs on film sets or against the backdrop of small American towns, sparing no expense or effort to create mysterious scenes, while collaborating with a team of up to a hundred crew members. His photographs show how the irrational, the enigmatic, and the uncanny find their way into the everyday, without, however, fully clarifying the implied narratives. Often indecisive and full of unease, the protagonists in Crewdson's photographs have come to a complete standstill, appearing introverted and lost. The artist thus depicts a society in which people have grown alienated from one another—and in this he is indeed a realist. Especially in the last three series, *Cathedral of the Pines* (2013–14), *An Eclipse of Moths* (2018–19), and *Eveningside* (2021–22), which were conceived as a trilogy, Crewdson adds an explicit sociopolitical component to the psychological stocktaking, placing his characters in an environment marked by economic decline. However, Crewdson's works are not only a portrayal of a United States far removed from the American dream. With a profound knowledge of art history, Crewdson also creates his scenes in a self-reflexive gesture at the interface of other art genres and mediums. The melancholy and loneliness of Edward Hopper's enigmatic paintings are reflected just as clearly as the psychoanalytically grounded nightmarishness of David Lynch's films. Cinema is certainly one of Crewdson's greatest sources of inspiration, as is manifested in a multitude of allusions, whether it be to popular blockbusters or art-house classics, as well as in the large-image formats inspired by the movie screen. For Crewdson, these are not formal ends in themselves, but rather serve to overwhelm the viewer by revealing surprising details even after prolonged viewing. Crewdson began staging his photographs in the 1980s, at a time when photography's reference to reality was (once again) being called into question by postmodern considerations. Gregory Crewdson's photographs are thus also a reflection on the nature of photographic images: the meticulous *mise-en-scène* breaks with the medium's inherent reference to reality, skillfully obscuring the boundary between fact and fiction.

The exhibition at the Albertina is the first retrospective anywhere in the world to bring together all of the artist's major series. It is particularly gratifying that this is accompanied by a substantial donation of Crewdson's works to the Albertina's Photographic Collection, which will allow us to further expand and sharpen our focus on photography from the United States. We owe the wonderful achievement of the exhibition to the support of Gregory Crewdson himself. The exhibition was conceived in close collaboration and consultation with the artist, who accompanied the process with great enthusiasm. The project would also not have been possible without the thoughtful support of studio manager Juliane Hiam. Further thanks are due to Manuel Radde, who was responsible for the graphic design of the catalog, and to Prestel Verlag and its staff—especially Markus Eisen and Cilly Klotz.

Many individuals have contributed to the realization of this project. I thank them all from the bottom of my heart. At the Albertina, I would first like to thank Walter Moser, Chief Curator and Head of the Photo-

graphic Collection, who conceived the exhibition, and Astrid Mahler, Curator in the Photographic Collection, who contributed to this project in terms of both content and organization. I would also like to thank Barbara Buchbauer and Jasha Greenberg for their professional handling of the exhibition installation and Sandra Maria Rust for her attentive supervision of the catalog. I would also like to thank Katharina Schuster of Collection Management, and Eva Glück, Head of Conservation, who, together with their team and colleague Barbara Kühnen, quickly and professionally handled the preparation, mounting, and framing of the objects, a challenging task due to their large formats.

I would also like to express my gratitude to our partner, the Kunstmuseum Bonn, where the exhibition will be shown in 2025. Special thanks are due to Stephan Berg, Director of the Kunstmuseum Bonn, and Barbara Martin, Curator for Prints and Photography, for their exceptional cooperation. The exhibition in Bonn would not have been possible without the kind support of the Friends of the Kunstmuseum Bonn and the Stiftung Kunst der Sparkasse in Bonn. Gregory Crewdson is an ideal addition to the museum's ambitious program. The Kunstmuseum Bonn has featured leading figures of American photography before, and in 2005 Stephan Berg, then director of the Kunstverein Hannover, organized one of the most important European exhibitions dedicated to Gregory Crewdson. It is therefore all the more gratifying that our retrospective is the first to include all of the artist's series created since then, further enriching the examination of his oeuvre.

Klaus Albrecht Schröder
Director General of the Albertina Museum

Gregory Crewdson completed his MFA at the Yale School of Art (Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut) with his series entitled *Early Work*. A native of New York City, Crewdson photographed this project in New Haven, Connecticut, in Brooklyn, New York, and in the small town of Lee, Massachusetts. Near to Lee is his family's summer home, where he spent his vacations. Crewdson's personal connection to the region led him to realize almost all of his photographic projects in and around Western Massachusetts.

Early Work was created in typical American suburbs of single-family homes and front yards. Crewdson asked the residents to allow him to photograph them in their home environment. He arranged the protagonists in interior spaces, mostly in close-up and fragmented views, framed by tight cropping. He also photographed interiors, gardens, and small streets. Already in this early group of works, the artist critically questioned the topos of suburbia as the ideal image of the American middle class. Crewdson's arranged scenes show little action. The people seem introverted and do not interact with each other. They are enigmatic images whose meaning is not resolved by the artist, as in the case of a woman lying on the floor with a shoe near her head. The use of artificial light and a targeted lighting regime emphasizes the mysterious mood of the mostly nocturnal images. The bright, luminous colors, which often seem in contrast with the menacing scenes, are essential. They reveal a preoccupation with William Eggleston, a key figure in the New Color movement, who, beginning in the 1970s, helped establish color images as an independent medium. Cinema is also an important source of inspiration for Crewdson: the intrusion of the inexplicable and the uncanny into everyday life, as well as the strange into the familiar, are central leitmotifs that have been shaped by film from the very beginning. Crewdson's biography also serves as an explanatory model for this interest, for, as the son of a psychoanalyst, he dealt early on with the human psyche and the subconscious, for example in connection with Sigmund Freud's theories.



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