

BERGGRUEN

GALLERY

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MICHAEL GREGORY

The Best Days are the First to Flee

January 14 – February 13, 2021

Berggruen Gallery is pleased to present *Michael Gregory: The Best Days Are the First to Flee*, an exhibition of eighteen recent paintings by California artist Michael Gregory. This show marks Gregory's thirteenth solo exhibition with the gallery and will be on view January 14 – February 13, 2021.

Michael Gregory's most recent body of work presents a series of new oil paintings that render the vast, captivating, and almost ineffable beauty of the American landscape—a subject matter that has always fascinated the artist. Gregory writes, "America has always been an idea, a construct of our imagination, and our imagination has outdistanced even its vast boundaries and empty places. The American West has provided us a rich metaphor for a discussion of our hopes, aspirations and failures. It is the subject of literature, poetry, and song—part of our American common language." Gregory's landscapes, rich in detail, continue to expand this great American metaphor.

Though Gregory usually paints the American West, *Michael Gregory: The Best Days Are the First to Flee* traverses from New York's Hudson River Valley to America's Heartland to California's Bay Area. Gregory has lived and worked in Bolinas, California for many years, but has recently built a studio in New York's Hudson Valley. This most recent body of work is a result of the westward, cross-country road trip Gregory took from his New York home back to Bolinas in 2020. The journey provided Gregory with an expanded visual vocabulary of American landscapes and buildings. Once returned to his studio, Gregory reimagines these places onto canvas. While some scenes are actual, most are amalgams from memory. The paintings ultimately become odes to fictional locations that we still recognize as real places. In the end, Gregory provides his viewer with a special glimpse into an American experience—one of space, travel, loneliness, vicissitudes of fortune, and great beauty.

In 29 BCE, Virgil published a poem titled *Georgics* which disseminated the dual importance and tension bound up in agrarian life. The opening line reads "*Optima dies prima fugit*," meaning "the best days are the first to flee." *Michael Gregory: The Best Days Are the First to Flee* features eighteen new oil paintings depicting the artist's signature barns and silos situated against broad plains, juts of rock greeting still river bends, and abandoned homes set against dramatic cloudscapes. Influenced by the Hudson River School, Gregory continues the tradition of prolific American landscape painting by imbuing his scenes with a luminous, transcendent quality. Yet Gregory also renews the movement with the inclusion of buildings, barns, granaries, or houses. The structures reflect, even pay homage to, the people who built, lived, worked, or left them. These individuals or communities are not painted into the picture, but their presence is palpable. We are left with scenes simultaneously remote, mysterious, and familiarly intimate.

Michael Gregory was born in Los Angeles in 1955. He received his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1980. Gregory is represented in numerous, prestigious public and private collections, including the Boise Art Museum, the Delaware Art Museum, the Denver Art Museum, The U.S. Trust Company in New York, Microsoft Corporation, General Mills Corporation, Bank of America, and the San Jose Museum of Art. Gregory's work has also been exhibited at major museums across the country, including The Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock; The Boulder Center for the Visual Arts, Colorado; The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, California; The Hunter Museum of Art, Tennessee; and The Butler Institute of American Art, Ohio. Gregory currently lives and works in Bolinas, California.

Michael Gregory: The Best Days Are the First to Flee, January 14 – February 13, 2021. On view at 10 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105. Open by appointment. Images and preview are available upon request. For all inquiries, please contact the gallery by phone (415) 781-4629 or by email info@berggruen.com.

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