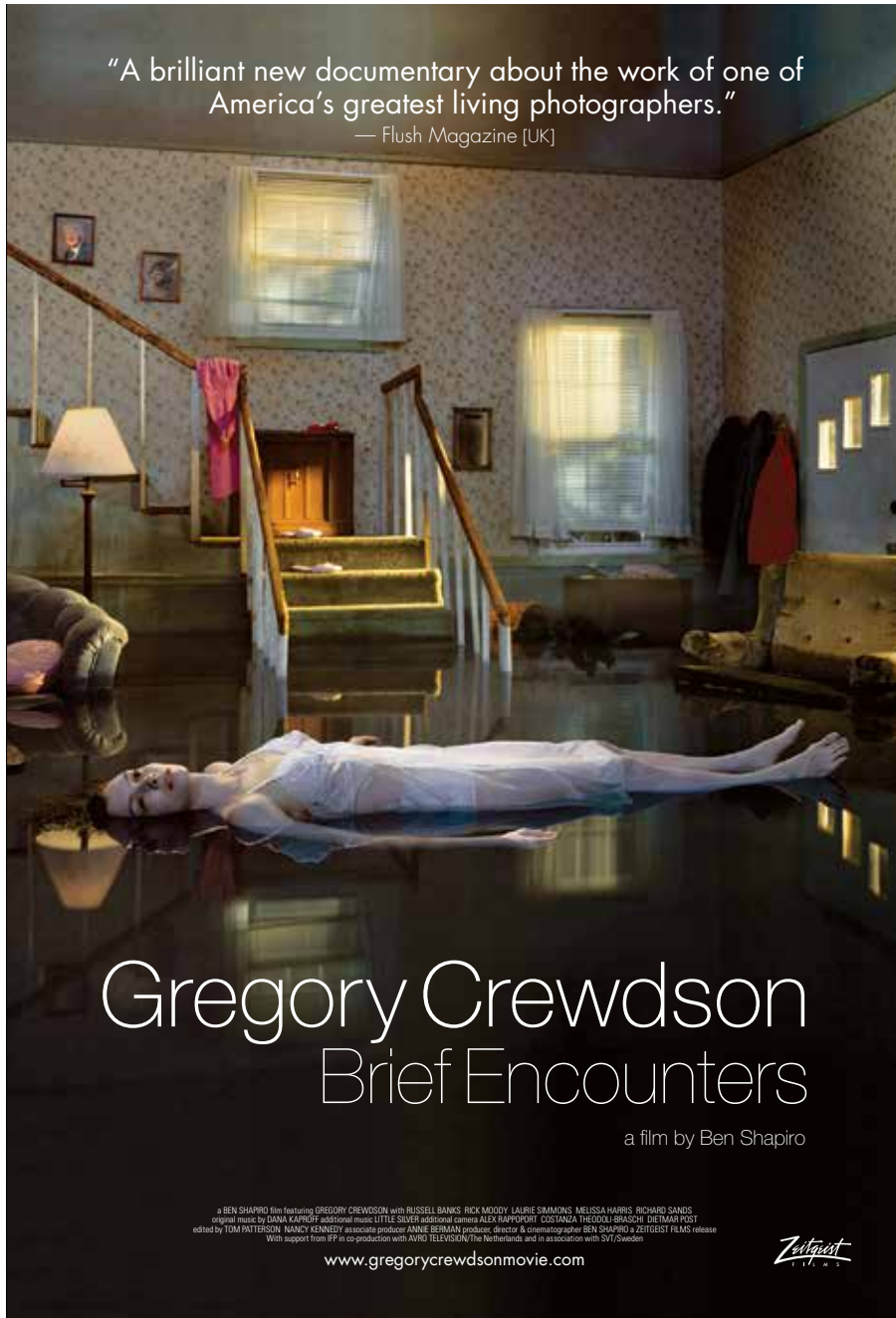


"A brilliant new documentary about the work of one of  
America's greatest living photographers."

— Flush Magazine [UK]



# Gregory Crewdson Brief Encounters

a film by Ben Shapiro

a BEN SHAPIRO film featuring GREGORY CREWDSON with RUSSELL BANKS RICK MOODY LAURIE SIMMONS MELISSA HARRIS RICHARD SANDS  
original music by DANA KAPRIFF additional music LITTLE SILVER additional camera ALEX RAPPOPORT COSTANZA THEODOLI BRASCHI DIETMAR POST  
edited by TOM PATTERSON NANCY KENNEDY associate producer ANNE BERMAN producer, director & cinematographer BEN SHAPIRO © ZEITGEIST FILMS release  
With support from IFF in co-production with AVRO TELEVISION/The Netherlands and in association with SVT/Sweden

[www.gregorycrewdsonmovie.com](http://www.gregorycrewdsonmovie.com)



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# Gregory Crewdson

## Brief Encounters

a film by Ben Shapiro

An acclaimed photographer with the eye of a filmmaker, Gregory Crewdson has created some of the most gorgeously haunting pictures in the history of the medium. His meticulously composed, large-scale images are stunning narratives of small-town American life—moviescapes crystallized into a single frame. While the photographs are staged with crews that rival many feature film productions, Crewdson takes inspiration as much from his own dreams and fantasies as the worlds of Alfred Hitchcock, David Lynch, Edward Hopper and Diane Arbus. Crewdson's imagery has also infiltrated the pop culture landscape—including his inimitable *Six Feet Under* ads and Yo La Tengo album art. Shot over a decade with unprecedented access, *Gregory Crewdson: Brief Encounters* beautifully bares the artist's process—and it's as mesmerizing and riveting as the images themselves.



Untitled (Ophelia)



Untitled (Worthington Street)

# Long Synopsis

*“My pictures are about a search for a moment—a perfect moment. To me the most powerful moment in the whole process is when everything comes together and there is that perfect, beautiful, still moment. And for that instant, my life makes sense.”* —Gregory Crewdson

Photographer Gregory Crewdson doesn't just “take” images, he creates them through weeks and months of elaborate invention, design, and set-up. Over the course of nearly a decade he created one of the most elaborate photo projects ever attempted: a series of haunting, surreal, and stunningly elaborate portraits of small-town American life —perfect renderings of a disturbing, imperfect world.

The epic production of these movie-like images is both intensely personal and highly public: they begin in Crewdson's deepest fantasies and memories, but come to life on streets and soundstages, in the hill towns of Western Massachusetts. Crewdson's productions are movie-scale. He works with crews of up to 60 that build 90 foot-long custom sets, block off city streets, and place hundreds of lights in shop windows. In the course of these productions, Crewdson faces seemingly countless logistical and creative obstacles—all to achieve what he describes as “one perfect frozen moment.”

Up until now, many of the details of how Crewdson creates these stunning photographs have been a mystery, only known by his crews and by the photographer himself. With unprecedented access, director Ben Shapiro filmed Crewdson for a decade, beginning in 2000. Throughout the film we witness his work grow and deepen, garner worldwide acclaim, and reach a climax of creative change as Crewdson's inspiration spirals in a radical new direction. The result is an intimate view of the creation of iconic works by one of the most renowned and influential artists of our time.

In addition to the process of making his photographs, *Gregory Crewdson: Brief Encounters* reveals the life-story behind the work—through Crewdson's frank reflections on his life and career, including the formative influences of his psychologist father and his childhood fascination with the work of Diane Arbus.

# Director's Statement



Crewdson on the set of Untitled (The Madison)



Crewdson on the set of Untitled (Twin Beds)

*Gregory Crewdson: Brief Encounters* was filmed over a ten-year span. I first encountered Crewdson and his work in 2000, when I was working on a piece about him for the PBS series *EGG*. I was immediately struck by the beauty and power of his images, and also by the care, vision, and complexity of the productions. The first Crewdson shoot I filmed was in Lee, Massachusetts—he was making a photograph of a man, apparently just returned home from work, who has removed his suit and is climbing a flower-covered beanstalk that has burst through the lawn. Members of Crewdson's team spent the day sorting through dozens of boxes of fresh flowers, carefully positioning and stapling them one at a time to the beanstalk, which was in fact a recycled telephone pole. It was an introduction to the kind of detail that contributes so much to the richness of his work.

Most of the filming of *Brief Encounters* was done between 2005 and 2009, when Crewdson was creating his epic series of photographs, "Beneath the Roses." When I proposed making the film, he was completely supportive and encouraging, as he remained throughout the entire production. He

granted me virtually unlimited access, from pre-production location scouting, right through to the taking of the pictures. A few times I even filmed from a position on the set itself, hidden from his camera by a piece of scenery. I worked solo during nearly all of the filming, and eventually became a frequent and relatively unnoticed fixture on his sets.

I filmed periodically, across many of Crewdson's shoots, unsure how the film would ultimately end. Then Crewdson himself provided a conclusion by finishing the "Beneath the Roses" series. He also decided he was done, at least for the time being, with such large scale productions. His subsequent body of work, "Sanctuary," appears at the end of the film: black and white images of the decaying back-lot of the famous Cinecitta studios outside of Rome. He worked there with a small crew, and apart from spraying some water on the ground, or adding some smoke, he captured the abandoned movie sets as they were. His "Sanctuary" photographs premiered in 2010.

—Ben Shapiro

# About Gregory Crewdson

Gregory Crewdson's work is in many collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum, LA County Museum. A traveling exhibition of his work is now touring museums in Europe.

The body of work featured in the film is "Beneath the Roses," and was produced from 2002–2008. The photographs at the end of the film, of the back-lot of Cinetta studios in Rome, comprise "Sanctuary," which premiered in 2010.



Untitled (Birth)



Crewdson on the set of Untitled (Birth)

"I began to recognize Crewdson as one of those rare artists touched by vision; someone whose work truly disrupted my sense of the known." —Bradford Morrow, *BOMB Magazine*

"Crewdson is one of the most daring and inventive contemporary artists using photography. Crewdson is a genuinely important figure in today's art world. He has an international reputation and has influenced an entire generation of younger photographic artists."

—Keith F. Davis, Curator of Photography at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

"Crewdson often shoots at twilight, and the bewitching qualities of what T.S. Eliot called "the violet hour" fill almost every shot.... He is a master of menace, melancholia and the macabre. He turns the American dream into a quiet nightmare." —*The Telegraph*, UK

"Crewdson's colossal images—painterly from far off, vidcam-crisp close up—capture the exact quality of a memory: that mix of the ineffable and the specific that calcifies in a single detail. Feel waves of ardor crash over you, and hold your breath." —Mathew Wilder, *ArtForum Magazine*

"The production and artifice of Crewdson's photographs recede and the viewer is lost in another world, remarkably drawn from the same matter as our own, but somehow both more and less than what we are accustomed to calling reality." —Nate Lippens, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

# Filmmaker Bios

## Ben Shapiro

PRODUCER, DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER

Ben Shapiro was born in Western Massachusetts, grew up in L.A., and today is a New York-based documentary director and cinematographer. His work has appeared on television (PBS, Sundance Channel, CBS, National Geographic), at major festivals, and museums including the Museum of Modern Art. His projects have received support from the National Endowments for the Arts and for the Humanities, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Awards include the Peabody, DuPont, Emmy, and AFI First Prize. He also is a radio producer and regular contributor to NPR programs and to *RadioDiaries*.

## Tom Patterson

EDITOR

Tom Patterson has edited feature documentaries including *Lemon*, *Cropsey*, and *Pool Party*, and television documentaries appearing on PBS, HBO, and the Sundance Channel. He has received New York Emmys and a National Emmy Nomination for Best Editing.

## Dana Kaproff

ORIGINAL MUSIC

Dana Kaproff began his film-scoring career apprenticing with such Hollywood giants as Elmer Bernstein, Jerry Goldsmith, and John Barry. He has gone on to compose the music for close to a hundred theatrical and television movies, as well as multiple series, mini-series, and documentaries. His credits include assignments for CBS, NBC, ABC, FOX, HBO, Showtime, PBS, Lifetime, Paramount, Universal, Columbia/Tristar, Time Warner, National Geographic, USA Networks, and Entertainment Tonight.



Top to bottom: Untitled (Brief Encounter); Untitled (The Madison); Crewdson on set

# Gregory Crewdson

## Brief Encounters

featuring  
**Gregory Crewdson**  
with  
**Russell Banks**  
**Rick Moody**  
**Laurie Simmons**  
**Melissa Harris**  
**Richard Sands**

producer, director &  
cinematographer  
**Ben Shapiro**

edited by  
**Tom Patterson**  
**Nancy Kennedy**

original music by  
**Dana Kaproff**

additional camera  
**Alex Rappoport**  
**Costanza Theodoli-Braschi**  
**Dietmar Post**

associate producer  
**Annie Berman**

additional music  
**Steve Curtis**  
**Erika Simonian**  
**Little Silver**

editorial consultant  
**Penelope Falk**

production consultant  
**Robert Hawk**

**a ben shapiro film**

With support from IFP  
In co-production with AVRO Television/The Netherlands  
and in association with SVT/Sweden  
(Commissioning Editor for AVRO: Marijke Huijbregts)

USA • 2012 • 77 mins • Color • 1.78 aspect ratio • Stereo • In English

**Photos and other Press Material can be downloaded from**  
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