

For Immediate Release:

Nate Burbeck: *Places Unknown*

February 20 – March 25, 2014

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 20, 2014

Anna Zorina Gallery is pleased to present *Places Unknown*, an exhibition of the enigmatic paintings of Nate Burbeck. The show, comprised of works completed since 2011, reveals a haunting world of prototypically American locales such as a suburban cul-de-sac, a highway rest stop, an empty field on the edge of town, each rendered alien by the insertion of an inexplicable surreal element. This disruption of our visual expectations is heightened by the addition of figures that stand trance-like, often placed or facing away from the central subject of the painting, expressionless and passive, like observers from another time and culture. The suspended tension of these juxtapositions allows the paintings, as the artist says, to “explore and to externalize an inner space or a psychological state that I feel permeates...contemporary American society.”

In *American Decadence*, a farm house perched on the rolling expanse of the northern plains bursts into flame, while two figures stand frozen, the woman in the foreground seemingly oblivious, the man facing the house but unable or unwilling to act. It could be a Jungian dreamscape or a symbol of the decline of the Midwestern family farm. In this and other works, Burbeck draws inspiration from diverse sources and media: films like *Blue Velvet* and *Days of Heaven*; photographers like Gregory Crewdson and Angela Strassheim; and painters like Rackstraw Downes and Edward Hopper. The latter is perhaps the most cited influence on the artist because of the manner in which both he and Burbeck explore isolation and unseen psychological events in the resounding silence of the American landscape.

Although Nate Burbeck’s paintings are oil on canvas and utilize the practices of the realist tradition, the journey to their realization is strikingly contemporary and multi-layered, requiring from the artist the complimentary talents of location scout, photographer, draughtsman and painter. The process begins with an intensive search of satellite images and progresses to street views, until Burbeck finds the perfect spot for the mood or “narrative” he wants to create. After the site is determined comes a road trip to South Dakota or Iowa or Texas, or perhaps to the suburbs of his own city, Minneapolis. Once on location, Burbeck waits patiently for the perfect light conditions to express the ambiguous and hushed mood he prefers, often at that magic hour of twilight visible in many of the paintings. Photographs are taken, sometimes with travel companions inserted directly into the scene, sometimes with figures that are added later from separate images. Back in the studio, the studies and combined elements lead to finished works, paintings that reveal the shadowy unknown that silently lurks beneath the known, the mysterious, quiet expression of stories without words.

Born and raised in Minneapolis, Nate Burbeck graduated from St. John’s University, Collegeville, Minn., where he was a scholarship student. In 2010 was invited into the Summer Residency program at SVA in New York. In 2013, Burbeck was named as one of “Ten Artists to Watch,” by the Walker Arts Center. This is his first solo exhibition in New York.