

Jordan West – *Go West Young Man*

Jordan West's *Go West Young Man* series depicts abandoned, passed by, and forgotten moments in the American landscape. West conceived of these paintings on his way home to the Southwest after living in New York. His stark and elegant paintings are fragments of Midwestern scenery from the vantage point of driving on long and desolate interstates.

As a traveler on a bleak and lonely road might be lulled into meditative contemplation while passing through a distorted extension of time, West examines moments and places typically obscured in our fast-paced world of motion and purpose. Time is suspended and the unobserved shifts into central focus. West's meticulous attention to detail and scale lends a hushed poignancy to dilapidated and forgotten spaces. Devoid of people, these empty roadsides, abandoned parking lots, and rundown gas stations are wistful snapshots of absence, memory, and decay.

West's work chronicles a faded world in stark juxtaposition to a dazzling color palette of vibrant greens, oranges, blues, and yellows. The mundane springs to life in simple, minimal lines that border on abstraction. His nearly photographic imagery is ordinary and familiar—telephone poles, cracks in the pavement, suburban driveways—depicting urban landscapes that are both common and remote, transforming ordinary scenes into rigorous studies of a forsaken America.

Bright green road signs along empty highways suggest the promise of the next exit, a chance for respite, a new possibility. A vivid orange sunburst on a gas station sign contrasts against a bleak white sky mirrored in a sea of blanched pavement and cracked sidewalks. A puddle of water at a derelict gas station reflects an inconceivably idyllic blue sky. Devoid of activity or potential for action, these paintings are disconcertingly full of hope, vibrancy, and expectation.

West's paintings are imbued with a melancholy reminiscent of Edward Hopper's stripped-down America-scapes. Hopper's world of empty diners and isolated railroads is accessible and familiar, as West's work implies a time and place just out of the reach of memory. It is the universal accessibility of the images and iconography of both artists that make their work haunting, familiar, and poignant.

West's work also calls to mind another characteristically American artist, Ed Ruscha. Ruscha fashions a universe of photographs and paintings in clean lines and deceptively simple and banal facades of car lots, roofs, gas stations and swimming pools. Roaming everyday streets searching for the awareness of real life as portrayed in Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, Ruscha, like West, searches for the extraordinary, haunting, and boundless within worlds typically associated with stagnancy and economic hopelessness.

Jordan West's paintings invite the viewer to contemplate what has become of spaces, memories, and forgotten moments in time. What would happen if we returned to these places? The *Go West Young Man* series is a meditation on the sliver of colorful hope in an otherwise isolated, dilapidated, and overlooked American landscape.

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