



DAVID HINES

3 AM: MOJAVE DESERT



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David Hines' desert nocturnes are arresting. Although their content might at first appear spare, it is precisely this quality that marks them out as noteworthy. Hines' compositions beckon us closer to seek what is submerged in their velvety darkness, and then we cannot look away. The panorama of a nocturnal explorer opens before us, evoking a state of being as much an actual place. The high dry spaces, deep stretches of darkness, and lone outposts are the energetic fuel of Hines' art, and they propel him into singular artistic territory.

David Hines earned both his Bachelor of Fine Art's and Master's Degrees in painting from the University of New Mexico. He was awarded artist residencies at the Harwood Foundation in Taos, the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, and the Roswell Artists in Residence program, all in New Mexico. His connection to solitude and nighttime vistas developed during his southwestern childhood, and from a formative boyhood experience. With his father, whose job took him far afield in New Mexico, Hines travelled by car throughout the night and into the early morning hours. These travels he says, were an "opportunity to observe lonely houses and ambiguous lights set back in the darkness, and make up stories about



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who lived there.” No doubt the experience left a powerful impression on the young Hines, and he continues to explore those memories and sensations today.

The lure of solitude, and the clandestine tensions of life after dark have enticed many artists, from Toulouse Lautrec to Edward Hopper. Hines’ approach to painting his nightscape scenes forgoes the usual partakers, those human intermediaries who could act as emotional surrogates or be observers in a voyeuristic sense. More akin to Andrew Wyeth’s unpeopled landscapes, Hines’ night scenes are first person: immersive, experiential, and suffused with an almost desolate presence.

Now a resident of the Mojave Desert in California, he says,

“My work is a direct response to engagements with scenes or objects I encounter in my daily life, and are determined by memories, feelings, ideas and longings that are part of my personality and which have informed my world (sic) view since earliest childhood. My night paintings seem to me to be the most poignant expression of my artistic goals.”

In his painting *Sun Village, Looking West to the Lights of Lancaster* (2018), Hines directs our eye to a solitary street lamp, its pool of wan light illuminating a patch of dry scrub and a stretch of vacant roadway. An inky darkness blankets everything, submerging all in hushed silence. But, as in nighttime stargazing the eye adjusts, and a more complex picture begins to emerge. A second, distant roadway lamp, shedding its own small pool of light, stands just at the center of the scene, expertly drawing the eye. The vague forms of several buildings emerge on the opposite bank of the road, defined in the shadowy distance by their mismatched light bulbs. Along the barely discernible horizon, pinpricks of light from a nearby city flare. With this device Hines situates the landscape, which at first seemed so forsaken, within the reaches of civilization, making it all the more poignant.

In *Storm in Antelope Valley* (2018), a single lamppost bathes the corner intersection in a dusty red light. But it is two tiny pinprick headlights emerging from the darkened roadway, set in juxtaposition to the startlingly incandescent lightning strike hovering in the distance that pulls the painting into breathtaking focus. With his reduced palette and a few



carefully orchestrated elements, Hines immerses us in a breathless, electricity-charged atmosphere of unforeseen consequences. In *Water Tank* (2018), Hines takes a different approach, coming in close on a singular, almost otherworldly structure. This oddly corralled yellow cylinder anchors the composition, its metallic reflection throwing out a small pool of gold into the disinterested darkness. The enclosing fence, message board, and attendant lamppost indicate its valued community standing, making its nighttime isolation even more striking. Isolation is again the dominant ambiance of *Lights of California Correctional Facility* (2018). Only a vague suggestion of neighboring structures and some brush and trees emerge to accompany the low building at the heart of the painting. Meticulously choreographed lighting—reflecting off the adjacent buildings, glimmering above an invisible horizon, illuminating the correctional facility façade, and ultimately, pulsing hotly in a bank of bright bulbs, gives this deceptively subtle painting its visceral intensity.

Darkness is the beating heart of Hines’ Mojave paintings; it is the central focus and enveloping presence that directs the tenor of his compositions. Yet his perceptive handling of

light is their key, acting as the necessary foil and giving each work its own subtle and distinctive range of tonality within the black. Several select elements—lampposts, street striping and signs, a few minor structures—reappear as variations to further emphasize the desert theme. Throughout, Hines expertly channels the hushed and abandoned stillness of the deepest pre-dawn hours. These are not the festive hours of partygoers, but the solitary arena of society’s outliers—the insomniacs, wanderers, monks, and mendicants who experience a world unseen by those dreaming safely in their beds. “Mystery and loneliness are the themes that unite all of my night work,” Hines states, “and they are palpable in the infinity that darkness suggests.” How to resolve our seemingly inconsequential efforts when set against the vast night and its endless galaxy of stars? Hines’ paintings elevate our questioning with a stark, enigmatic beauty, and we are willingly lured into their captivating enchantment.

Helaine Glick
Independent Curator



Cover:

Water Tank, 2018, Oil on linen, 24 x 44 inches

Inside Flap:

East of Lancaster, 2018, Oil on linen, 14 x 30 inches

Inside Panels:

Sun Village, Looking West to Lights of Lancaster, 2018, Oil on linen, 20 x 36 inches

Storm in Antelope Valley, 2018, Oil on linen, 20 x 36 inches

Lights of California Correctional Facility, California City, 2018, Oil on linen, 22 x 38 inches

Back Cover:

Antelope Acres, 2018, Oil on linen, 20 x 36 inches

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