

Press Release

## Arshile Gorky. Horizon West

21 February – 25 April 2026  
Hauser & Wirth West Hollywood



**Los Angeles...** In the summer of 1941, Arshile Gorky, his soon-to-be wife Agnes 'Mougouch' Magruder and Isamu Noguchi packed into Noguchi's brand-new Ford station wagon and set out for Los Angeles from New York City. Their two-week road trip marked Gorky's first visit to California and his first extended time away from the East Coast since arriving in America as an Armenian refugee in 1920. Focused on the transformative impact of this journey, 'Horizon West' will present a selection of Gorky's landscapes from before, during and after the transcontinental trip, tracing the development of his incomparable approach to the genre.

Opening 21 February at the gallery's West Hollywood location, the exhibition will feature never-before-exhibited works alongside paintings from the artist's first solo museum show in August 1941 at the San Francisco Museum of Art (later SFMOMA), offering visitors a rare opportunity to study at close range the evolution of Gorky's landscapes in response to his first-hand experience of America's terrain.

Gorky helped drive the shift toward abstraction in 20th-century American art, serving as a crucial bridge between the dreamlike imagery of surrealism and the later development of abstract expressionism. Synthesizing the legacies of art history and engaging the innovations of such contemporaries as Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró and Willem de Kooning, he developed a wholly original visual vocabulary. The 1940s marked a period of intensified creativity for Gorky, sparked by his journey through the American West—an experience that prompted him to



dramatically change his thinking and subject matter, particularly his intimate encounters with revelatory details: Mougouch recounted that when the trio arrived at the Grand Canyon, Gorky and Noguchi turned their backs on the immense vista, declaring it ‘too big to be interesting.’ Yet at a nearby Hopi reservation, Gorky was enthralled by handmade adobe ovens that reminded him of the clay stoves from his childhood in the Armenian Highlands. ‘We drove up to Big Sur,’ she recalled, ‘It was all so beautiful, but he wasn’t stunned—he only liked things he could get close to; he liked hills he could walk over.’

After Gorky’s exhibition in San Francisco closed, Noguchi remained in California while the couple traveled back to New York. On their way, they stopped in Virginia City, Nevada, where they married in September 1941, and then honeymooned along the Yuba River in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Upon their return to New York City that October, Gorky created works inspired by their travels, rendering new contours and colors that would stir memories from his early years. It was during this period that he painted the masterful ‘Untitled (Mojave)’ (1941), its vivid palette reflecting the desert’s stark intensity. Prior to traveling west, Gorky had been working on a series that referenced his upbringing in Khorkom; immediately after his return, this work crystallized into his breakthrough Garden in Sochi series, which presaged his later celebrated abstract landscapes. According to Mougouch, Gorky painted the final surface of his masterful green ‘Garden in Sochi,’ now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, on the night they returned to New York.

Over the ensuing years, Gorky continued to seek solace and inspiration in the natural world, often deploying landscape motifs to express emotional undercurrents and fragmented childhood memories. Between 1943 and 1946, he spent extended periods at Crooked Run Farm, the Virginia homestead owned by his wife’s parents. There, he produced numerous drawings ‘en plein air,’ channeling his immediate bodily responses to the environment through automatic drawing and free association. ‘I do not paint in front of, but from within nature,’ he explained. The resulting works, including ‘Untitled (From a High Place II)’ (1946), signal a profound reawakening of his connection to the landscape.

As the exhibition’s title suggests, Gorky’s travels catalyzed shifting perspectives, both literal and psychological. By bringing the artist’s transcontinental road trip into focus, ‘Horizon West’ invites visitors into the eye and mind of a 20th-century visionary. It offers insight into what compelled Gorky to ‘look into the grass,’ toward the micro, the intimate and the worlds once lost to memory, where his observations of the physical landscape coalesced into an indelibly provocative visual cosmos.

#### **About the Artist**

Arshile Gorky (ca. 1904 – 1948) was born an ethnic Armenian in Khorkom, Van, Ottoman Empire (present-day Türkiye). Fleeing the genocide that claimed the life of his mother, he immigrated to the United States as a teenage refugee in 1920. After four years with relatives in Massachusetts, Gorky moved to New York and changed his

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name in honor of the celebrated Russian poet. Refusing all categories, whether artistic or political, as necessarily reductive, Gorky forsook assimilation in favor of celebrating his otherness, becoming a central figure of the cultural milieu of a city on the brink of modernism.

After a decade of working in New York, where he achieved a prominent position as a leading artist, Gorky initiated a series of studies and paintings observed from nature while on holiday in Connecticut first, and then over two summers at a farm in Virginia. Frequently returning to fragmentary and idealized elements of his early life, Gorky incorporated memories from his childhood as well as his adult fears and desires, among the reality of his surroundings.

### Public Program

On Wednesday 25 February, the gallery will present a screening of the new film 'Horizon West' by Cosima Spender and Valerio Bonelli. Comprised of original footage and archival material, 'Horizon West' traces Gorky's transcontinental journey. Following the screening, the filmmakers will be in conversation with Saskia Spender, President of the Arshile Gorky Foundation and the artist's granddaughter, and D.W. Moffet, Chair of the Film and Television Department at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah GA. For more information, please visit [hauserwirth.com/events](http://hauserwirth.com/events).

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Gallery hours:

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Untitled (Mojave)

1941 – 1942

Oil on canvas

73.3 x 103.2 cm / 28 7/8 x 40 5/8 in

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Burt Kleiner

Photo: Museum Associates/LACMA

Untitled (Butterfly and Leaf)

ca. 1932 – 1934

Ink on paper

35.6 x 43.2 cm / 14 x 17 in

Photo: Peter Schälchli

Untitled (From a High Place II)

1946

Oil on canvas

43.2 x 61 cm / 17 x 24 in

Photo: Todd-White Art Photography