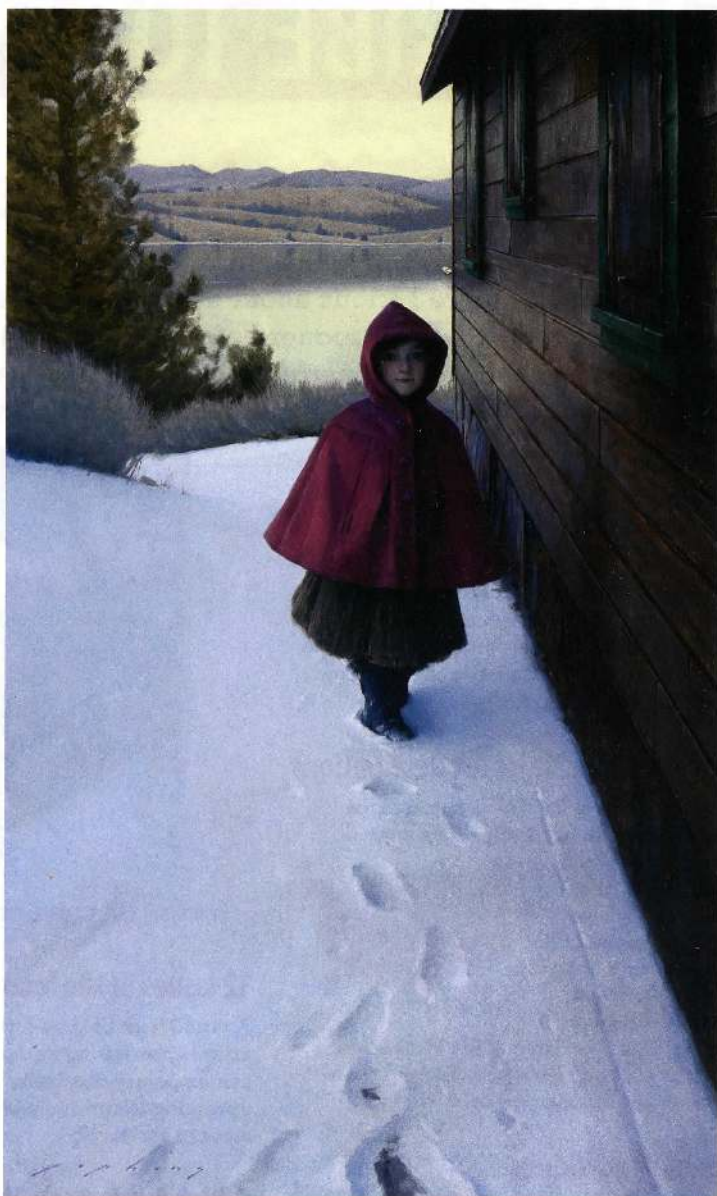


# The Calm & Quiet

*After nearly two years of fighting the elements, Jeremy Lipking returns with a meditative and peaceful new show.*

BY MICHAEL CLAWSON



1

**F**irst there was fire. Then plague. As a final insult, there was a flood. Jeremy Lipking was a locust away from something biblical. "It certainly felt like we went from one thing to another," the California painter says. "And just when things calmed down we got right back into it again. I know we're definitely ready for some normal times, as I'm sure the rest of the world is too."

This story has a happy ending—one that culminates in Lipking's long-awaited new solo show, *Silence & Sagebrush*, opening March 12 at Legacy Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona—but the journey to that point is one of grit and perseverance, and speaks to the quiet and forceful steps artists take in the studio as the real world interrupts, but never stops, their creative visions.

It begins November 8, 2019, in the Santa Susana Mountains outside Los Angeles.

1  
Sierra's Path, oil, 40 x 24"

2  
Gathering, oil, 36 x 18"



Heated material from a power line drops down onto dry vegetation, causing a fire in Woolsey Canyon. Fed by strong Santa Ana winds, the brush fire quickly turns into a raging inferno that sweeps through the canyon and into surrounding areas. The Woolsey Fire forces the evacuation of nearly 300,000 people, including the Lipking family whose home was in the path of destruction. It took firefighters two weeks to control the fire, and then several more weeks before homeowners could go into the area and survey the damage. Lipking and his wife, Danielle, were prepared for the worst.

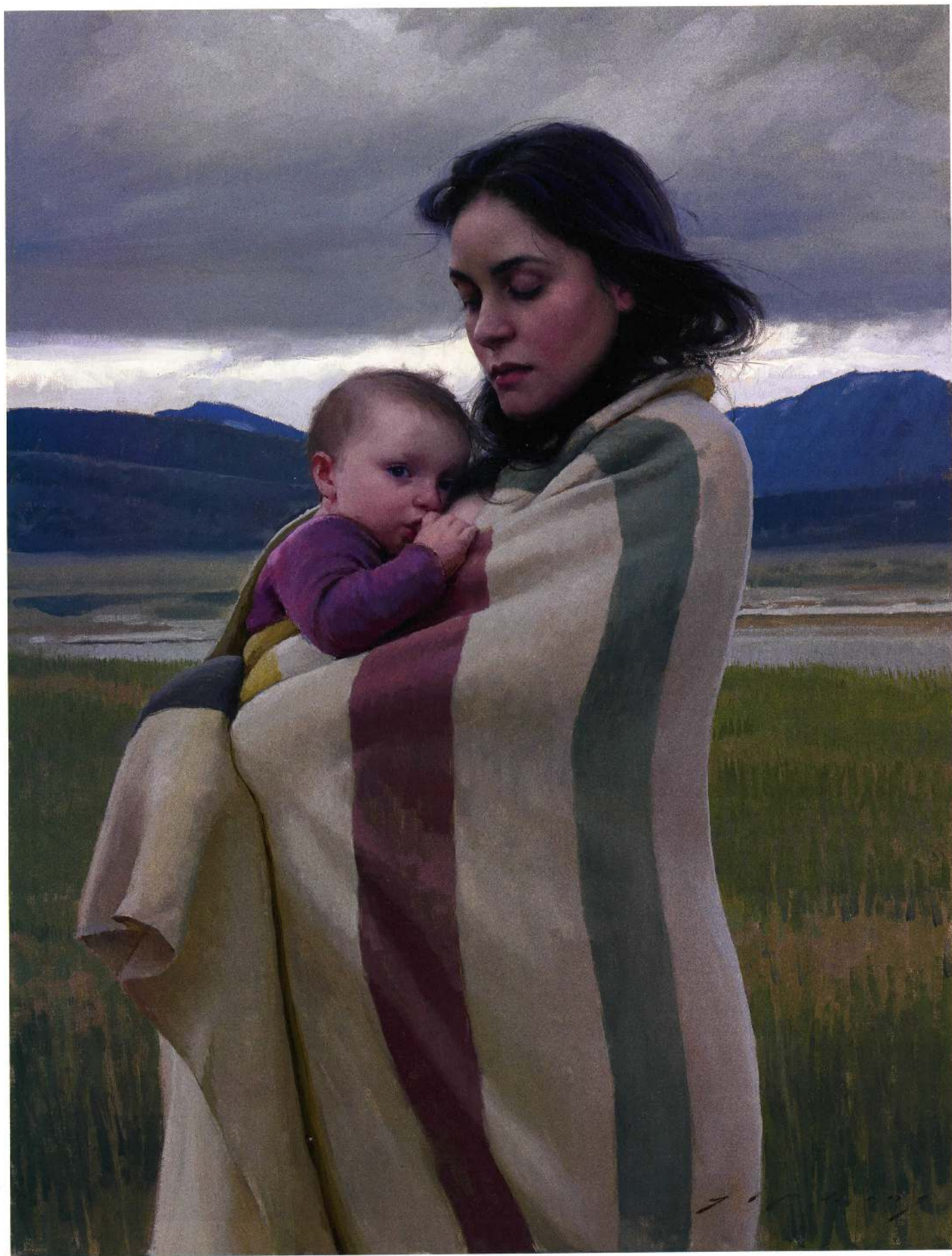
"I remember when they opened the area they had left the roads closed, but people who already had cars up there were shuttling people back and forth to their homes, but some people just walked. Our house was somewhat close so we just started in on foot and really got to see the devastation up close," he says. "And then we get to our house and it was still there, remarkably. There was damage to our guest house, but the main house was basically untouched, which was weird to see because of some of the damage on the property. We had aluminum chairs almost right next to the house just completely melted. Inside was fine, except the fire generated hurricane-force winds, which pushed soot and ash all over the house. It was unlivable for a long time. Basically everything soft had to be replaced. Our daughter's window was cracked open, literally just millimeters, and the fire blew this crazy amount of ash into the room."

Lipking and his family were grateful they still had a home, especially since so many others, including neighbors, had scorched ruins where their homes once stood. Their own journey to return to some kind of normalcy would take months as carpet, mattresses, bedding, furniture and even the insulation in the walls were all replaced and minor damage was repaired. Meanwhile there were painting commitments, including the still-far-off Legacy show and several commissions. Lipking had only recently moved out of an off-site studio and into a two-car garage right before the Woolsey Fire, so his painting schedule was often determined by what was happening in his house on any given day. "I definitely required more quiet in the studio before that time, but then within a couple months I was very used to it, especially with little kids running around the house," he says. By early 2020, Lipking was back up and running and things were looking hopeful. "I felt like a well-oiled machine," he adds.

Then the whole world changed.











4

3 *Protector*, oil on linen, 24 x 18" 4 *Blue Bonnet*, oil, 16 x 20"

For many artists, the pandemic has not altered too much of their daily routines. Artists can be reclusive creatures that thrive behind studio doors, and health lockdowns and travel restrictions have done little to interfere with that. It was trickier for Lipking since he had five school-aged children at home, including 4-year-old twins who were in separate pre-schools. Then, when many schools switched to virtual learning, making sure everyone was online and prepared for school became more time consuming than they realized. "At that point I took a few months off to make sure it ran smoothly with Danielle. At times it felt like a full-time job. And there was definitely an additional level of anxiety with children around as the world was in absolute chaos. It made it hard to get into that zone where the paintings could come out," he says. "Once it settled down, I basically had to lock myself in my studio to focus, but also to disconnect from everything happening in the world."

Lipking was so focused he had to bow out of several major shows and museum exhibitions, including the

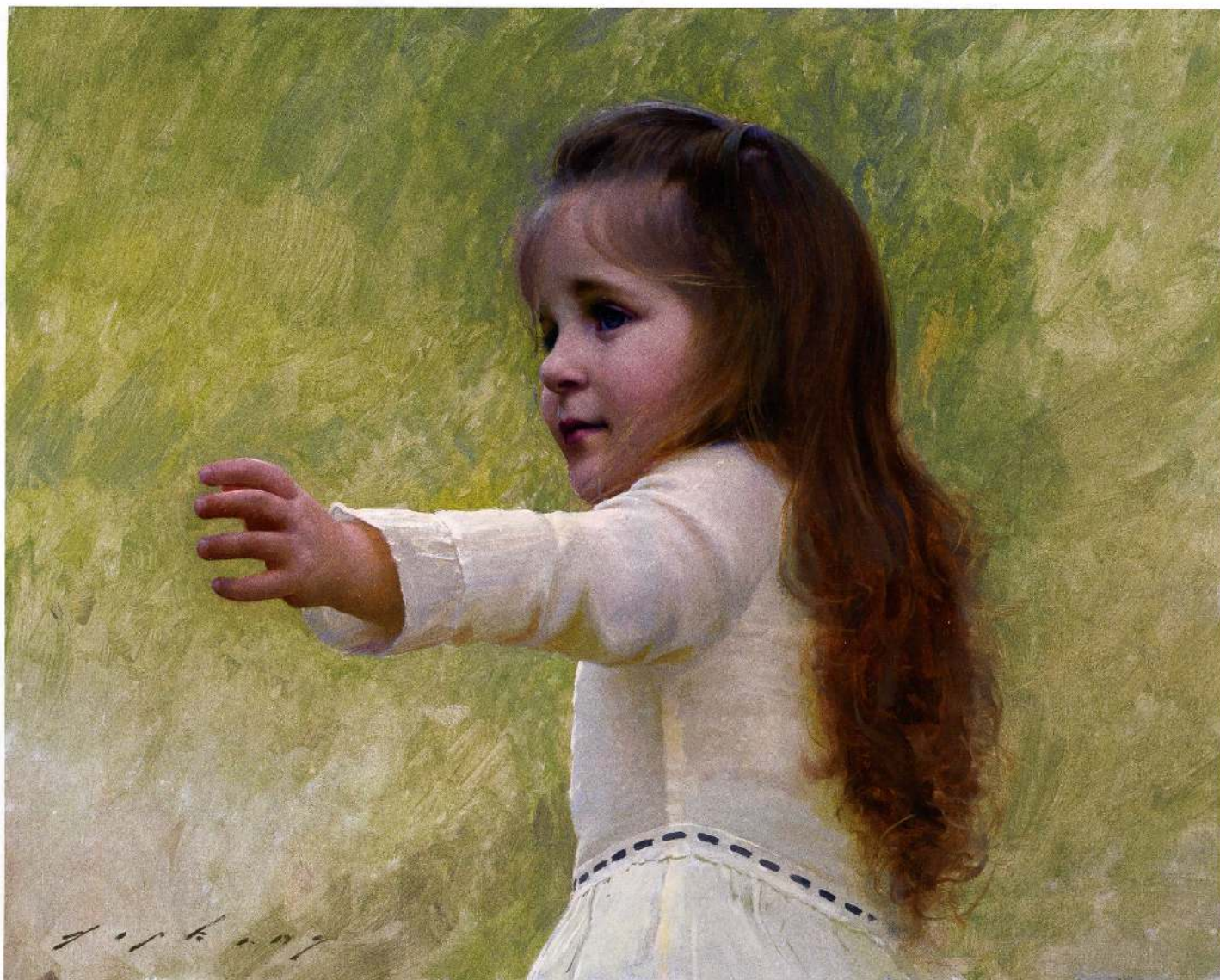
2020 and 2021 *Masters of the American West* at the Autry Museum of the American West, but early work coming from the studio revealed he was on track with where he wanted to be. Initial pieces—including the peaceful snow scene *Sierra's Path*, inspired by the family cabin in the Sierra Nevadas and depicting his daughter Sierra—showed a reflective, somber tone, with figures gazing off into the distance, possibly looking into their past or longing for their futures. All of the pieces were set outdoors and showed the figures, many of them his own children, interacting with the bountiful beauty of nature, which takes on a new meaning considering what the artist almost lost in the Woolsey flames.

Soon came more work: *Protector*, showing a mother and nursing baby amid stormy skies; *Gathering*, showing his daughter amid a magnificent growth of matilija poppies, which grow naturally around their home; and *Of Earth and Sky*, a work that shows how masterful and delicate Lipking's brush can be with faces and subtle expressions. The new pieces also have many Western connections, including with *Desert*









5 *Sharing Secrets*, oil, 36 x 24" 6 *The Hope of a Child*, oil, 16 x 12"

*Song*, a work showing a Navajo woman in a traditional velvet shirt and dress on top of a white horse. The work simultaneously captures that brilliant and vibrant light that explodes from the scenery at sunset, as seen on the cliffs in the far background, and twilight's desaturating effect on color, as seen on the figure and her horse. Elsewhere in the new works are plenty of traditional Navajo or Hudson Bay blankets and, in *Flicker*, a vintage hat with a rattlesnake hatband. Lipking is widely respected by two kinds of art collector—contemporary figurative and Western art—and the works unite the two worlds under one sky.

Lipking was on a roll, and closing in on the 15 paintings he was hoping to get done for the Legacy show, but 2020 had one more surprise for him and his family at the end of the year. Enter a flood in the form of a broken pipe in their kitchen. A year earlier they were driven from their home by fire, so now it would only be fitting that water would do it again. Everyone was safe, the house was fixable and the art was undamaged, so Lipking did what he did all year long—he pushed

through, undaunted and undeterred. He finished several of the last pieces from a rental while their house was being repaired.

"It's funny how everything has played out, especially looking back at how easy it is to get out of creative shape," he says. "And yet, even as so many things were stopping my momentum, you gradually just step back into it, one painting at a time. That's the beauty of painting. Once you're in it, everything comes into focus and starts making sense. Art can be very intuitive, even amid the chaos that surrounds us." ●

## JEREMY LIPKING: SILENCE & SAGEBRUSH

**When:** March 12-21, 2021; opening reception, March 13

**Where:** Legacy Gallery, 7178 Main Street,  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

**Information:** (480) 945-1113, [www.legacygallery.com](http://www.legacygallery.com)