

LOOKING FOR GEORGIA :
New Mexico in the
Footsteps of Georgia
O'Keeffe
Lydia Bauman - Paintings
Karl E Dudman - Photographs

25 February - 2 March
2019 10 am - 5pm
Mall Galleries The Mall
London SW1
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Two women artists at different points in history, living on different continents, pitching themselves against the same dramatic and magnificent wilderness of New Mexico, with only their own particular techniques as tools...

The legendary Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) needs no introduction.

I most likely do. I am both a landscape painter and an art historian fascinated by the phenomenon of this iconic American artist and her idiosyncratic interpretations of the landscape of New Mexico.

I too have been a painter of wilderness for many years. I interpret it in a complex mixed media technique : I mix pigments into plaster; use resin to trap sand, grit and mica; melt beeswax and experiment with rusting solutions, patinas, texture gels, embossing powders, glazes, varnishes and mediums. By these methods I create textured surfaces strongly evocative of the look and feel of the landscapes I observe around the world.

In late 2016 I stood amongst her iconic paintings of New Mexico desert at the exhibition "Georgia O'Keeffe" in London's Tate Modern and I asked myself:

- to what extent did her paintings represent the true character of that landscape?

It was perhaps inevitable for me to eventually travel to the country Georgia O'Keeffe called "my backyard" to check it out for myself. After months of preparation, I finally realised my ambition in September 2017 when I packed a pair of sturdy shoes, a hat, a sketchbook and a camera and set off to New Mexico in search of Georgia.

What would it be like to find myself in a landscape so thoroughly appropriated by another, much celebrated artist ?

How would our different methods serve the character of the land?

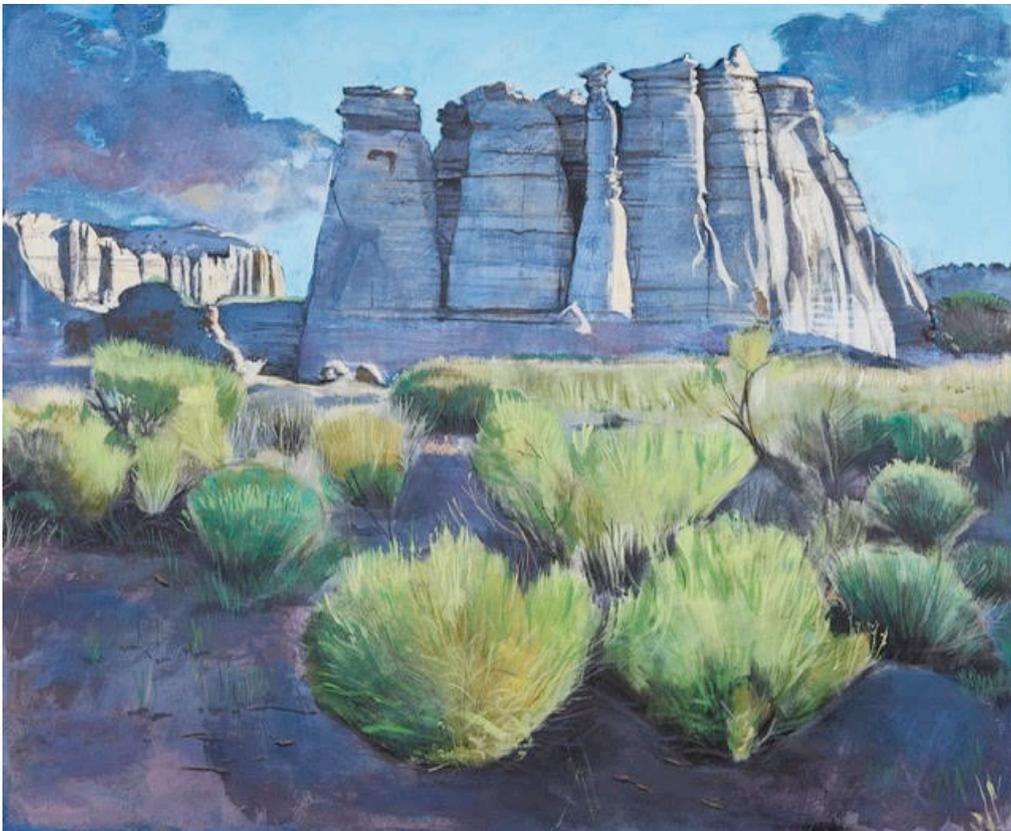
How important is it to know a place well in order to paint it well?

My itinerary took me to Santa Fe where I familiarised myself with the art of Native American tribes, whose colourful and bold creations influenced the look of much of O'Keeffe's work.

I then travelled further North to Taos where Georgia, fleeing a cheating husband, first discovered Northern New Mexico on a visit to a friend in 1929.

Then West to Abiquiu, the quintessential Georgia O'Keeffe country, where the artist set up two different homes, one right there in the town of Abiquiu, another further North in Ghost Ranch, Northern New Mexico.

This is the region so redolent of O'Keeffe's paintings, the 'badlands' as she called them: hills striated in bands of red, ochre and orange; white cliffs and pinnacles of the 'Plaza Blanca'; dramatic black and grey undulations of the 'Black Place'; cottonwood trees meandering along the Chama River, and above all, the iconic Mesa Pedernal - flat-topped mountain which was to O'Keeffe what Mont Ste Victoire was to Cezanne: it was "*my mountain, if I painted it often enough, God told me I could have it.*"



*One of O'Keeffe's favourite motifs, The Plaza Blanca near Abiquiu by **Lydia Bauman**, mixed media on canvas 113cmx150cm 2018*

O'Keeffe spent nearly sixty years of her long life living in, observing and painting that land, working in isolation, forging her way towards abstraction and eventually achieving the status of the most celebrated American female artist of all times.

It was immensely moving and inspiring to follow in the footsteps of the great American painter. I learned a lot by looking at and sketching the very locations where she lived, walked and painted and directly comparing them to her paintings. I was surprised to note that rather than embracing the grandeur and visceral physicality of the desert, O’Keeffe preferred an abstracted design of smooth shapes, painted in oils on modestly sized canvases. With her eye firmly fixed on the art trends in New York and Paris and in the process of becoming the leading light of the Modernist movement, O’Keeffe seems to have sacrificed the true spirit of the land she loved so much.

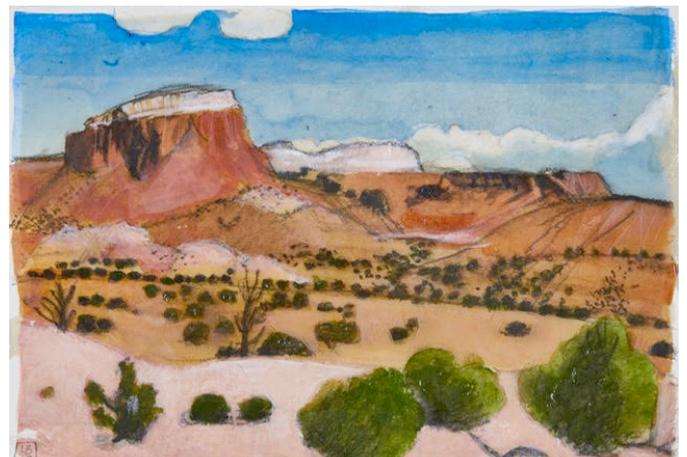
This confirmed my longstanding conviction that a different, more robust interpretation of a land which overpowers, humbles, assails all the senses, might serve the spirit and grandeur of “Georgia O’Keeffe country” well.

By enriching my vocabulary of techniques I set out to create a body of work which might evoke in the viewer a response as powerful and as visceral as the landscape of New Mexico itself.



Lydia Bauman: *Chimney Rock in Ghost Ranch, New Mexico, heart of Georgia O’Keeffe country.*
mixed media on panel, diptych, 4’x 8’, 2018

below: Lydia Bauman m/m studies on paper 12”x 16” showing two of O’Keeffe’s favourite motifs - the Kitchen Mesa and the Mesa Pedernal, Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, NM





Lydia Bauman: *Red Hill, Ghost Ranch, New Mexico*
120cmx140cm mixed media with silver leaf on canvas

LYDIA BAUMAN is a Polish born artist and art historian based in London. Having trained in Fine Art at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and in Art History at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, she divides her time between studio practice and lecturing in art history at the National Gallery and around the UK and abroad. Her mixed media landscapes have been the subject of over 30 solo exhibitions in the UK, USA, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Poland and are in collections worldwide incl Saatchi & Saatchi, Warner Bros, United Airlines, Deutsche Bank, State Street Bank, Linklaters, Gordon Ramsey and The Dorchester.

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New Mexico in Photographs by Karl Dudman will be displayed as part of *Looking for Georgia* exhibition.



KARL E DUDMAN has a background in Anthropology (UCL) and Human Geography (Oxford) with special interest in the entanglements of nature and society and the relationships of people with the environments in which they live. A writer, award winning photographer and also Lydia Bauman's son, Karl travelled to New Mexico with the artist to record Georgia O'Keeffe's influence on our understanding of New Mexico landscape. He is the author of an exhibition catalogue essay exploring O'Keeffe's place in the many overlapping narratives that have historically painted this "land of enchantment".

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