

Artist's Statement

Nothing is less real than realism. Details are confusing. It is only by selection, by elimination, by emphasis, that we get at the real meaning of things.

Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe, the great American woman painter is an inspiration to me. I selected the title for my show "Georgia's Ghost", because her story, her journeys and her life have inspired me for many years. When I visited New Mexico for the first time in the early 1970's Georgia O'Keeffe became a part of my consciousness. Her statement about New Mexico, "It gets in your blood, once I saw it I was always waiting to go back", describe my own feelings. Her early breakthroughs as a painter came while she was teaching in the wide-open desert of west Texas. For me, it is a romantic landscape.

When I was thinking of a name for my show I knew I wanted to pay tribute to my muse, and when I selected the word Ghost it was a play on words, a reference to Georgia's home in New Mexico which is called Ghost Ranch but also as a reference to her presence in my own creative journey. The word, however, took on new meaning as the work in this show progressed.

The real meaning of things? These are some notes I jotted down in my journal while searching for a reason for this work. Is it about Names? Love? Loneliness? Place? Religion? Growing things? Feeling the sun on my face? Moving my body with my breath? New Mexico? The way I feel when I travel? It's about how I feel when I run off, headed west via the back roads, with no destination in mind. It is about that.

There are favorite places, signs, old buildings, bars, old Spanish missions, burrito stands and roadside parks that I have revisited and photographed on each trip I get to take. I usually have 3 cameras loaded and I rotate through all 3 before changing film and starting over. But the images I chose to work from in this show are mostly from my little plastic Holga camera. They are blurry on the edges and some are vignetted, a result of the cheap plastic lens. It is a photographic way to eliminate detail and to emphasize the selected subject. I chose to make cyanotype prints because I like photographs that are handmade.

Cyanotype prints are made by hand coating drawing paper with an emulsion made from iron salts as opposed to silver salts that produce black and white prints. The iron salts result in a blue print. And this is where Georgia's real Ghost appears. In mid August of this year I made my final print for the show. I left all my prints on my worktable in the basement while I went away for a short trip. While I was gone, the water filter in my refrigerator burst and apparently spewed water the whole time I was gone. Unfortunately the refrigerator was right over my worktable and the work had been soaked and "rained" on for 3 days. It was irrevocably altered. Not only was my show ruined but a big portion of my house was ruined as well. Each night, exhausted from cleaning and drying

and repairing the damage, I would go down to the basement and look at the photographs. Slowly I began to adjust to their new look. They began to take on a magical quality for me. Still not trusting my own perception I asked an honest friend to come over and give an opinion. After a summer's worth of work, it was too hard to let go of it. These images are not as I originally intended them to be, but somehow in the washing away, a ghostly image remained. More was revealed when the shadows opened up. The image I call "Georgia's Whisper" even managed to reveal an orb in the sky. In a mystical way everything seemed to come together and make sense to me. I learned from this experience that pushing your work beyond what you think is the final piece might be good. When I think back to the original work it seems that maybe it was too academic, too perfected, too calculated, but not pushed out into any new way of seeing.

The images are small, I can't answer why except that they work for me when they are small. I have to get very close to them in order to see them and as I do that the rest of the world falls away and I am in the image, at the place, in my head, where I love to be.

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