

Maryam Eisler

## *Searching for Eve in the American West*

3<sup>rd</sup> November – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2016

Press Preview: Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016, 5 – 6pm

Private View: Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016, 6 – 9pm



Mallina (The Sun Goddess), (2015), giclée print, 98 x 65 cm

Tristan Hoare is delighted to present *Searching for Eve in the American West*, a new collection of photographs by Maryam Eisler.

Whilst working on a major book on American artists in their studios in 2012\*, Eisler visited Ghost Ranch in Abiquiú, New Mexico, the estate in which the renowned American Modernist Georgia O'Keefe lived, worked, and produced her iconic paintings. The experience of arriving at the house – surrounded by rugged cliffs and craggy pinnacles, and starkly delineated by the brilliant desert light – was a revelatory, haunting moment. Echoing O'Keefe's own words: *'Such a beautiful untouched lonely feeling place, such a new part of what I call "the Faraway" ... It is a place I have painted before*

... even now I must do it again', Eisler was captivated by the brutal vastness of the New Mexico desert, and vowed to return, this time with camera in tow.

In an attempt to capture something of the landscape's primordial significance, Eisler spent days in the majestic, inhospitable environment – working from dawn to dusk and voyaging deeper and deeper into its canyons, plateaus and arroyos. Further inspired by the Modernist American poetry that she had been reading, which included the work of Elizabeth Bishop, Sylvia Plath, E. E. Cummings, Ezra Pound and others, the journey took on an almost quixotic character. In a sense it was Eisler's own poetic adventure, as she herself recalls: *'The search for Eve, my muse, somewhere between the majestic heavens and Mother Earth, standing atop the rocky inclines, as sensual and as powerful as the monumental nature that had surrounded her.'*

To this end, Eisler photographed female models within the desert surrounds. As the academic, editor and writer Anthony Downey has written in his essay in the exhibition's accompanying catalogue, this approach *'answered the need to understand the discombobulating landscape through the reassuring presence of human figures. In its isolated and sparsely inhabited environs, the region is perhaps almost too much to experience on one's own.'*

Eisler is not the first photographer to be inspired by this wild landscape – others include Ansel Adams and Edward Weston. Indeed, a statement made by Weston might equally apply to Eisler's inspiration: *'The camera should be used for a recording of life, for rendering the very substance and quintessence of the things itself, whether it be polished steel or palpitating flesh.'*

In the images Maralah and Wakanda, the model and the landscape are unified in form, and there is an intuitive quality to the figures across the series that recalls the archetypal and primordial histories of the desert. In Onatah, this balance is extended as the model envelops the twisting trunk of a solitary tree. Photographed and printed in black and white, the play of light and shadow in the works has a sense of pure tonality that is further redolent of associations of Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the prelapsarian state of innocence. The searing desert heat and light throw Eisler's compositions into sharp relief, as in Kachina, an image which encapsulates the linear quality of shadow as it falls across corporeal form.

Across the series, Eisler's photographs capture the immensity of geological time and wild space; following in the footsteps of some of the most

renowned artists of the twentieth century, she has rendered this mythic landscape with sensitivity and vision.

\**Art Studio America: Contemporary Artist Spaces* co-published by Thames and Hudson

For more information contact Albany Arts Communications:

Mark Inglefield, [mark@albanyartscommunications.com](mailto:mark@albanyartscommunications.com)

t: + 44 (0)20 71 73 28 77

m: + 44 (0) 75 84 19 95 00

Jessica Clifford, [jessica@albanyartscommunications.com](mailto:jessica@albanyartscommunications.com)

t: + 44 (0)20 71 73 28 77

m: + 44 (0)74 81 46 26 25

### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **About Maryam Eisler:**

Maryam Eisler holds a BA from Wellesley College and an MBA from Columbia University. She has held executive editorial roles on publications including *Unleashed: Contemporary Art from Turkey*; *Art and Patronage: The Middle East*; *Sanctuary: Britain's Artists and their Studios*; *Art Studio America: Contemporary Artist Spaces* and *London Burning: Portraits from a Creative City*. She is currently photographing for *London East: Rebels with a (Creative) Cause*, for which she is also the author. Eisler co-chairs Tate's MENAAC Acquisitions Committee and is a member of the Tate International Council. She is a trustee of the Whitechapel Gallery, sits on the advisory board of Photo London and is a nominator for the Prix Pictet photography prize. This is her first exhibition.

#### **About Tristan Hoare:**

Tristan Hoare was based in Notting Hill at the Lichfield Studios from 2009 to 2014. In September, Tristan Hoare will stage its first exhibition at its new premises at 6 Fitzroy Square. Entitled *Ensō*, it is a presentation of works by the Japanese ceramicist Taizo Kuroda, and photographs by Ursula Schulz-Dornburg.

#### **Opening times:**

For the duration of the exhibition, the gallery will be open Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 6pm