

Things to know before visiting Georgia O'Keeffe exhibit



Leslie Bailey, leslie.bailey@indystar.com

2:18 p.m. EST November 4, 2014



(Photo: Image courtesy International Arts)

The first thing you need to know about "Georgia O'Keeffe and the Southwestern Still Life," the new exhibit at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, is that it isn't just about Georgia O'Keeffe. While you'll find plenty of pieces by the "Mother of American Modernism," the exhibit tells the tale of the American Southwest as seen by the artists who were a part of its vibrant art scene in the early 20th century.

O'Keeffe's contemporaries included artists such as Marsden Hartley, Raymond Jonson and Victor Higgins, whose still-life works will also be on display when "Georgia O'Keeffe and the Southwestern Still Life" opens on Nov. 2.

But no other artist from the time and region captures people's attention like O'Keeffe, with her enlarged views of flowers, trees, shells, rocks, crosses, doors and sun-bleached bones.

Harriet Warkle, guest curator of American Art at the IMA, hopes that it is through O'Keeffe that visitors take a view of the Southwest that they never knew existed.

"We're talking about her because she is the most important name in the exhibition but this is about how artists responded in the Southwest, why they went there, what they discovered when they got there and how they brought it back to be shown in the East. That's how people got the picture of what the Southwest is like," she said.

Q. Which other artist in this exhibit was second to O'Keeffe in changing the world's view of the Southwest?

A. Gustave Baumann because he did multiples. People who didn't have much money could buy them where artists like O'Keeffe did one of a kind. The average person didn't get to see their work outside of maybe a picture in the newspaper but his work got disseminated.

Q. What can we expect from the exhibit?

A. The exhibit is divided into four areas: flowers, cultural artifacts, architecture as still life and bones -- those last two become O'Keeffe's most important works from that time. She's already done skyscrapers and flowers. To understand the cultural aspect of the Southwest, you'll get that from the secondary artists, you'll get the Native American culture and Hispanic culture.

Q. You mention two important areas of her work in the Southwestern period as architecture and bones -- what about the flower paintings?

"Jimson Weed," is a part of the IMA's collection and part of the exhibit -- it was O'Keeffe's largest flower painting. She was commissioned by Elizabeth Arden in 1936 for the exercise room of her Arden Sport Salon in New York. She wanted something for the spa that would unfurl -- a strong painting.

Q. The most common perception of her flower paintings is the supposed sexual connotation behind them. What are your thoughts on that?

A. The year she married Alfred Stieglitz the same year she painted her first flower painting. I think there's some connection there but I wish people would talk less about the sexuality in her paintings. That's not what's important about her art."

Q. What is most fascinating to you about Georgia O'Keeffe?

A. She's a household name. You say "Georgia O'Keeffe," nobody says to you, What did she paint? Once they know who she is they can immediately conjure up what she's painted.

Q. What do you think are the biggest misconceptions about her?

A. That she was stiff, unfriendly or kind of nasty but that's not true. People say she was wonderful to work with. She had a stiff personality, she really didn't like to be bothered but she wasn't unkind. It was a misconception that she was aloof, maybe as a painter but not as a person.

Q. She didn't sign her paintings. Why not?

She thought people should be able to recognize them just by looking at them. She felt that her art was so recognizable if people tried to copy her they would never get it.

Q. What about O'Keeffe's other interests outside of art?

A. Gardening - she had a vegetable garden, an herb garden, a flower garden, trees and shrubs. She had pear, apple, apricot, peach and a thick row of raspberry bushes. She planted them to eat them of course but she was as much an artist in her garden as in her painting. They're trying to restore her garden in New Mexico back to its original way.

Call Star reporter Leslie Bailey at (317) 444-6094 and follow her on Twitter: [@Lesalina \(http://twitter.com/lesalina\)](https://twitter.com/lesalina).

Want to go?

WHAT: Georgia O'Keeffe and the Southwestern Still Life.

WHEN: Nov. 2 through Feb. 15.

WHERE: 4000 Michigan Road.

TICKETS: \$20/adults (Friday-Sunday), \$15/adults (Tuesday-Thursday), \$12 children ages 7-17, free for children under 7 and museum members. On Oct. 31 and Nov. 1, members will receive a sneak preview of Georgia O'Keeffe and the Southwestern Still Life during Member Preview Days (<http://imamuseum.us2.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=11135c13753e5596137ad6fc2&id=9109749342&e=896edbbf6e>).

INFO: (317) 923-1331, www.imamuseum.org.

Did you know....



Georgia O'Keeffe was a foodie? You'll find a few of her favorites in "A Painter's Kitchen: Recipes from the Kitchen of Georgia O'Keeffe," for sale in the IMA gift shop (\$16.95).

Read or Share this story: <http://indy.st/1tl126a>

A Painter's Kitchen: Recipes from the Kitchen of Georgia O'Keeffe.

(Photo: Museum of New Mexico Press)



A TUMOR THE SIZE OF A CANTALOUPE ON YOUR LUNGS IS AS SCARY AS IT GETS.



To learn more click here. community.com/cancercare

MORE STORIES



Its ticket sales up, ISO now takes its show on the road
(/story/life/2014/12/08/ticket-sales-iso-now-takes-show-

road/20117925/)

Dec. 8, 2014, 7:43 p.m.

takes-show-
road/20117925/)



WZPL Jingle Jam, featuring Train.
(/picture-

(/picture-
gallery/life/2014/12/08/wzpl-jingle-jam-
featuring-
train/20087871/)

gallery/life/2014/12/08/wzpl-jingle-jam-
featuring-train/20087871/)

Dec. 8, 2014, 10:43 a.m.

Indy's Film Historian **(/picture-**
gallery/news/local/johnson-
county/2014/12/04/indys-film-



[historian/19890443/](#)

Dec. 8, 2014, 10:34 a.m.

[\(/picture-gallery/news/local/johnson-county/2014/12/04/indys-film-historian/19890443/\)](#)



"I lose my keys
ALL. THE. TIME."



[Buy Tile Today ▶](#)