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ARTS + ENTERTAINMENT - VISUAL ARTS

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## Five must-see pieces from the IMA's 'Georgia O'Keeffe and the Southwestern Still Life'

By Dan Grossman

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Georgia O'Keeffe, "Yellow Cactus," 1929. Copyright 2014 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Image courtesy International Arts.

Georgia O'Keeffe first visited New Mexico in 1916, started painting there in earnest in 1929 — and, in 1949, made it her permanent home. She was compelled by its vast landscapes, exotic mix of cultures and rich history. But she certainly wasn't the only one.

Opening at the Indianapolis Museum of Art this week, *Georgia O'Keeffe and the Southwestern Still Life* tells the story of the region's rich artistic diversity via 24 pieces by O'Keeffe — and 43 more by her contemporaries, including modernists like herself (Stuart Davis, Marsden Hartley) and those sticking to a more traditional path (Joseph Henry Sharp, Maurice Sterne).

Harriet Warkel, a guest curator for American Art at the IMA, says that the still lifes in the show offer an unexpected take on the Southwest. She talked with us about five or so key pieces in the exhibition, which was produced by the museum services outfit International Arts and curated by Charles C. Eldredge.

### Georgia O'Keeffe, "Jimson Weed," 1936

"The best O'Keeffe flower painting in the exhibition. There's no question about that." Now part of the IMA's permanent

collection, the oil painting was commissioned in 1936 by cosmetics magnate Elizabeth Arden for the exercise room of her new Arden Sports Salon in New York City. While O'Keeffe "was into New York subject matter," she chose to paint "something from the Southwest," in line with her work at the time.

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Joseph Henry Sharp, "Crow Papoose and Pueblo Rain Gods," undated. *Copyright Joseph Henry Sharp. Image courtesy International Arts.*

### **Joseph Henry Sharp, "Crow Papoose and Pueblo Rain Gods," undated**

Sharp's painting is "interesting because one of the rain gods in the image is broken." Warkel contrasts the philosophy of the Hudson River School, which held that the "forests were disappearing," with Sharp's view that Native American culture was "disappearing" under the influence of "Modernism and technology." Sharp was one of the first European-Americans to paint in New Mexico, visiting Taos for the first time in 1893 on a commission from *Harper's Weekly*.

### **Georgia O'Keeffe, "From the Faraway Nearby," 1938**

The Metropolitan Museum of Art-contributed piece is important, according to Warkel, because it shows how "her style and subject matter changes when she goes to the Southwest." And while O'Keeffe often magnifies her subject matter, such that flowers and other natural forms look unnatural, "From the Faraway Nearby" is "really imaginary because it shows a deer skull — and the antlers of that deer practically cover the whole painting."

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Gustave Baumann, "Hopi Katzinas," 1924. Copyright New Mexico Museum of Art. Photograph by Blair Clark. Image courtesy International Arts.

### Gustave Baumann, "Hopi Katzinas," 1924

Baumann's print of "different types of kachinas in a ceremonial dance presentation" came to the IMA from the New Mexico Museum of Art. Warkel notes that because Baumann was a printmaker, his work was cheaper and more widely "disseminated among people who have less money." Baumann's work will be highlighted in a solo exhibition opening at the IMA in October 2015.

### O'Keeffe's patio doors

"Her patio door was one of her most important types of images," Warkel says. "And we have several of the patio door images. It's hard to choose one that's better than another."

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by Dan Grossman



#### Ambience as aphrodisiac: Georgia O'Keeffe at the IMA

The paintings and prints on display at the IMA's "Georgia O'Keeffe and the Southwestern Still Life" speak to the enduring love that many artists have felt for New Mexico.

by Dan Grossman

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