

FRIDAY, MAY 21, 2004

## UMMA Presents Major Re-evaluation of Georgia O'Keeffe

Thursday, May 20, 2004 — Sunday, September 26, 2004

University of Michigan Museum of Art

ANN ARBOR, (amnews.com) — The University of Michigan Museum of Art presents "Georgia O'Keeffe and the Sublime Landscape," an extraordinary exhibition that re-examines the work of one of the world's most iconic artists. From her earliest works, O'Keeffe was a visionary who intuitively created new definitions of the sublime, enhanced our perceptions of its visual symbols, and inevitably provided us with new ways to view our surroundings and explore our inner selves. In the early 1930s, O'Keeffe wrote about "that memory or dream thing I do for me comes nearer reality than my objective kind of work." This comment connects O'Keeffe to the aesthetic concept of the sublime, with its immediate sensation of awe-inspiring, infinite space, and evocative color and light directly internalized in our own lives.

Spanning more than five decades, the exhibition features over 35 paintings, some drawings, and one sculpture by O'Keeffe, together with paintings by important American artists such as Albert Bierstadt, Martin Johnson Heade, and George Inness from the Hunter Museum of American Art (Chattanooga, Tennessee). Also included are photographs by O'Keeffe's husband, Alfred Stieglitz, and noted American photographer Todd Webb. The exhibition, which is accompanied by a comprehensive and well-illustrated catalogue with essays by noted scholars and artists, will be on view at UMMA from July 11 through September 26, 2004. After its debut in Ann Arbor, the exhibition embarks on a national tour.

"'Georgia O'Keeffe and the Sublime Landscape' wholly embraces UMMA's educational mission to present the work of outstanding visual artists within the framework of new and exciting scholarship," said James Steward, director of the Museum. "I'm very grateful to our generous corporate, foundation, and media sponsors for helping us to share this exceptional reassessment of O'Keeffe's oeuvre with our visitors."

"Georgia O'Keeffe and the Sublime Landscape" is organized by Joseph S. Czestochowski, and circulated by International Arts, Memphis, Tennessee. The exhibition was made possible by the assistance of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, Abiquiu, New Mexico; George Eastman House, Rochester (Alfred Stieglitz Collection); and the Museum of New Mexico, Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico (Georgia O'Keeffe Collection).

The Ann Arbor presentation of the exhibition is made possible in part by Ford Motor Company.

Additional support has been provided by the Office of the Provost of the University of Michigan, Pfizer Global Research & Development, THE MOSAIC FOUNDATION (of R. & P. Heydon), Michigan Radio, Borders Group, the Ann Arbor News, and the State Street Area Association.

Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) is well known for her elegant studies of enlarged flowers and bleached animal bones in the southwestern desert. By situating O'Keeffe's work within the 18th-century aesthetic concept of the sublime—which associates feelings of fear, gloom, and awe with landforms of immense scale and size, such as mountains, oceans, and deserts—the exhibition shifts the focus of her artistic identity as a 20th-century modernist to include a broader conception of her pioneering creative influences and her unique place in the American artistic tradition.

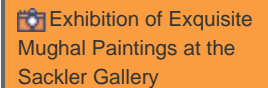
Although most of O'Keeffe's works are landscapes, the sublime, for her, was not necessarily associated with a physical location—New Mexico, Lake George, or elsewhere. Hers was a state of mind in which nature and the sublime transcended specific times and places.



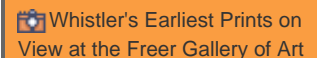
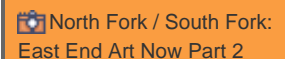
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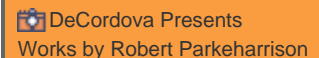



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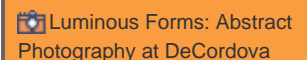



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O'Keeffe's paintings were powerful poems distilled from her imagination and her vision of our surroundings, seductively simple and appealing, yet highly complex explorations of ever-relevant universal sentiments.

O'Keeffe begins her compositions by using design as an organizing principle and moves freely between realism and abstraction. Images such as "Untitled (Desert Abstraction) (Bear Lake)" (1931) and "From the River-Light Blue" (1964) translate earth, water, and sky into geometric bands of color and light. Manipulation of scale, use of fragments, precise lines and blurred edges, bold colors, all combine to create works that serve as powerful reflections of O'Keeffe's private emotional experiences. In turn, views like "Waterfall—No. III—'Iao Valley" (1939) and "Canyon Country" (1965) provoke profound feelings of reverence and sublime awe in the viewer.

Vintage black-and-white photographs, from the George Eastman House (Rochester, New York), by Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) whom O'Keeffe married in 1924, include his innovative cloud studies "Equivalents," which were inspired by O'Keeffe's art. Stieglitz's seminal images of O'Keeffe herself from the 1920s and 30s complement the exhibition and explore how the two influenced each other's work. Rounding out the exhibition is a selection of more informal and candid photographs of O'Keeffe by Todd Webb (1905–2000), provided by the Evans Gallery–Todd Webb Trust (Portland, Maine) from the 1950s and '60s, in the places she lived and cherished—Abiquiu, Glen Canyon, and Ghost Ranch.

The exhibition includes works of art loaned by institutions across North America, including: the Amarillo Art Museum; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, Abiquiu; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Honolulu Academy of Arts; The Menil Collection, Houston; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of New Mexico, Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe; National Gallery of Art; Phoenix Art Museum; Philadelphia Museum of Art; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

#### PUBLICATION

The companion publication includes nine groundbreaking essays that align O'Keeffe's work with earlier concepts of the sublime. Contributors include Charles C. Eldredge, Eugenia Parry, Marjorie Balge-Crozier, Therese Mulligan, Barbara Novak, Robert Rosenblum, James Turrell, Sharyn R. Udall, and John Wilmerding. Printed in Milan, the 228-page catalogue is illustrated with 132 color and 70 duotone plates. The catalogue is edited by Joseph S. Czestochowski and co-published by The Torch Press and International Arts. It will be available for purchase in the Museum gift shop.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

The University of Michigan Museum of Art is located on the University's central campus at the corner of South State Street and South University in Ann Arbor.

Open Tuesday to Saturday 10 am–5 pm; Thursday 10 am–9 pm; Sunday noon–5 pm. Closed Monday and major holidays.

For more information: (734) 763-UMMA; <[www.umma.umich.edu](http://www.umma.umich.edu)>.

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