

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

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Georgia O'Keeffe: A Retrospective

Europe – Italy, Germany and Finland beginning September in 2011

The work of Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) is among the most well-known in America, as is the artist herself. She became known in the 1920s as one of America's leading modernists, and from then until her death in 1986, she and her work garnered extraordinary and increasing attention in the American art community and with the American public. Indeed, interest in O'Keeffe and her work continues to escalate, and she remains one of America's best-loved and most celebrated artists and icons.

Her work, however, is generally unknown beyond American shores, a situation for which Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) was primarily responsible. As America's first modernist photographer and its first advocate of modern art, he introduced O'Keeffe's art to the New York art community in 1916, and he became her dealer that year and her husband in 1924. As the most ardent promoter of her work, he made O'Keeffe's art accessible to New Yorkers with the annual exhibitions of it that he organized from 1923 until his death in 1946. By 1929, his promotional efforts had realized sales that made O'Keeffe a millionaire in today's money, which provided her complete financial security.

In the beginning decades of the twentieth century, Stieglitz resented the fact that American art was not regarded with the same degree of importance as that of the Europeans. He became committed to the then revolutionary idea that American artists could create an art indigenous to America that would be valued with the same acclaim as that of the European masters. As a result, he refused to send the work of any of the artists he supported to exhibitions outside of the United States: Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Paul Strand, feeling that if people wanted to see American art, they should come to America. Thus, these artists' works were and remain little known outside of the United States.

O'Keeffe works are currently in several European collections as a result of recent gifts from The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, which dissolved in 2006. Also, in the last ten years, exhibitions of O'Keeffe's work have taken place in England, Spain, and Switzerland. But none has been presented in either Germany or Italy. This retrospective exhibition will thus be the first to acquaint these European audiences with O'Keeffe's extraordinary works.

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The exhibition will be made up primarily of work from the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum collection, which houses more than half of the artist's entire output, with a few works from other American and European collections. Examples of O'Keeffe's work in charcoal, watercolor, oil, and her sculptures will represent her creative efforts in each of these media. Moreover, selections of works from each decade in the seventy years she was active as an artist (1915-1984) will provide an overview of the kinds of subjects that interested her, from her abstractions of the 1910s, to her innovative and famous large-scale paintings of the 1920s, which include flowers, other natural forms, as well as New York city pictures.

The show will also include works from the decades O'Keeffe worked in both New York and New Mexico, 1929 to 1949, when she made the area her permanent home), such as the many landscape and architectural forms she produced in both places, as well as her famous paintings of subjects specific to New Mexico: architecture, bones, skulls, and paintings of its highly colored and dramatic landscape configurations. In addition, the exhibition will include works she produced after moving to New Mexico in 1949 as well as those that were inspired by her travels beyond American shores that began in 1951. Indeed, she travelled extensively, making several trips around the world, until the early 1980s, when illness made it impossible for her to travel.

The exhibition will also present photographs of O'Keeffe made by Stieglitz, who photographed her from 1917 until the mid-1930s, when he put his camera down. Other photographs of O'Keeffe that date from both before and after Stieglitz's death will be on view, such as images by Ansel Adams, Todd Webb, Andy Warhol, Don Worth, to name only a few. These photographs document two public images of O'Keeffe created through photography: a sexualized provocative O'Keeffe, which was the creation of Stieglitz beginning in the 1910s; the self-determined, serious, and uncompromising image that O'Keeffe created of herself from the 1920s to the end of her life.

Fondazione Roma Museo, Rome

October 4, 2011 through January 22, 2012

Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, Munich

February 3, 2012 through May 13, 2012

Helsinki City Art Museum

June 7, 2012 through September 9, 2012

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Georgia O'Keeffe Museum:

The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum is dedicated to perpetuating the artistic legacy of Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) and to the study and interpretation of American Modernism (late nineteenth century-present). Located in Santa Fe, NM, the Museum's collections, exhibits, research center, publications and education programs contribute to scholarly discourse and serve diverse audiences. The largest single repository of the artist's work in the world, the Museum's collection includes a wide range of O'Keeffe paintings, drawings and sculptures. It is the only museum in the world dedicated to an internationally known American woman artist and is the most visited art museum in New Mexico.

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