The Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Presents O’Keeffe at the University of Virginia, 1912-1914

Rarely seen watercolors created while O’Keeffe was a student at the University of Virginia demonstrate her early experimentation with abstraction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—November 1, 2016; Santa Fe, NM: The Georgia O’Keeffe Museum is pleased to announce that on Friday, November 4, a new installation of O’Keeffe’s early watercolors will be on view at the Museum. Created by the artist while a student at the University of Virginia from 1912-1914, the watercolors have never been exhibited.

O’Keeffe’s watercolors are among the Museum’s great treasures because they demonstrate her early and immediate attraction to the ideas of modernism and abstraction. This exhibition presents some of O’Keeffe’s earliest investigation of the ideas of simplified and refined compositions. No longer interested in mere representation, she begins to interpret her environment by experimenting with alternative configurations of flattened shapes. The works show her dramatic shift to and adoption of the ideas of modernism in 1912 when she took a summer course taught by Alon Bement at the University of Virginia. He introduced her to the revolutionary ideas of his colleague Arthur Wesley Dow, who encouraged artists to use their imagination and explore self-expression, instead of creating literal representations of their worlds.

The watercolors from UVA will complement galleries exploring O’Keeffe’s early artistic growth. “This suite of watercolors demonstrates O’Keeffe’s early adaptation of new ideas,” said Curator Carolyn Kastner. “We are pleased to present these paintings, which have never been exhibited before, to offer additional insight into the O’Keeffe’s professional development.” As O’Keeffe embarked on her career, she continued to simplify and strengthen her work by boldly experimenting with composition, scale, and varying degrees of abstraction.

As part of the Museum’s continual refreshing of the galleries, also beginning on Friday, November 4, will be a new display featuring time-lapse photography of the spectacular views
from O’Keeffe’s home at Ghost Ranch, a former dude ranch located on 21,000 acres of high desert landscape 65 miles northwest of Santa Fe. Looking south to the distant blue mountain, known as the Cerro Pedernal (Flint Hill), and north to the nearby red and yellow cliffs, it is easy to imagine how she was inspired to paint the ever-changing panorama she experienced daily.

The watercolors and time-lapse photography installations will be on view at the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum through the summer of 2017.

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ABOUT THE GEORGIA O’KEEFFE MUSEUM:
To inspire all current and future generations, the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum preserves, presents and advances the artistic legacy of Georgia O’Keeffe and modernism through innovative public engagement, education, and research. Opened in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1997, the Museum counts O’Keeffe’s two New Mexico homes as part of its extended collection. The Museum’s collections, exhibitions, research center, publications and educational programs contribute to scholarly discourse and serve a diverse audience. For more information, please visit okeeffemuseum.org.