

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

O'Keeffe Conservation Reveals Hidden Insight into Painting

Visitors will have the chance to view conservation process, O'Keeffe's original intentions.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—June 25, 2018 (Santa Fe, NM) — New work by the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum's conservation department has revealed hidden insight into Georgia O'Keeffe's dramatic 1923 oil painting, *Storm Cloud, Lake George*. For years, audiences and experts have assumed the painting represented a stormy night scene at Lake George, New York, where O'Keeffe and her husband Alfred Stieglitz regularly visited his family's estate. Yet current conservation reveals that the painting actually depicts an afternoon tempest.

The painting recently returned to the O'Keeffe Museum after an international tour. As part of a routine condition assessment and minor repair work, it became evident that the painting's varnish obscures surface details. A conservation process now underway will allow the painting to represent O'Keeffe's original intentions.



Storm Cloud, Lake George, 1923

"Museums are places of discovery," says Dale Kronkright, Head of Conservation. "We do what O'Keeffe told us to do: 'look closer'." Upon detailed inspection and research, Kronkright realized that the layers of varnish applied to the painting over many years hid O'Keeffe's original work. The shiny film—intended by previous caretakers to preserve the painting—had actually altered the appearance of the color and texture of O'Keeffe's creation. Kronkright was thrilled at "...seeing her matte, opaque paint. This is not supposed to be saturated, dark, and translucent. What we see emerge is a completely different painting." The revelation is also notable because researchers believe it to be Georgia O'Keeffe's earliest known use of matte-textured paints.

Conservation is an integral part of the Museum's mission to preserve and protect O'Keeffe's artistic legacy, and it occurs constantly. Usually this scientific detective work takes place in the climate-controlled vault, away from the public eye. This summer, Museum visitors will have the rare opportunity to see the conservation of *Storm Cloud, Lake George* in progress. Beginning this month, the partially conserved painting will be on view in the Museum's galleries, giving audiences a chance to compare the different areas of the work, with and without varnish. It is unusual for museums to present works undergoing conservation in progress. The split-textured *Storm Cloud, Lake George* will be on exhibition June 27 through October 28. After that time, it will return to the lab for Kronkright to complete its treatment.

Once finished, the fully restored *Storm Cloud, Lake George* will be on regular view at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Accompanying it will be interactive exhibition materials about the project's merge of art, history, and science.

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Image and required credit: Georgia O'Keeffe. *Storm Cloud, Lake George*, 1923. Oil on canvas, 18 x 30 1/8 inches. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of The Burnett Foundation. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. [2007.1.18]

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. The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum presents an ongoing series of thematic galleries exploring the career of the artist through her artwork, art materials, archives, and the landscapes and experiences that defined her life, on view throughout 2017. For more information, please visit okeeffemuseum.org.