



Artful Living

**O'Keeffe &
Modern Design**

EXHIBITION GUIDE

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About This Publication

Introduction

Giustina Renzoni, Curator of Historic Properties, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum



Balthazar Korab. Abiquiú House, Exterior, ca. 1965. Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation Photographs, MS.57. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

Nestled in the desert landscape of Abiquiú sits an unlikely mid-century–modern masterpiece. With a discerning eye for design, Georgia O'Keeffe transformed this dilapidated adobe house into a modern artist's sanctuary where she would go on to create some of her most iconic works. With its large picture windows, skylights, open layout, and modern furnishings, her home circumvents regional norms while retaining the original architectural features and traditional adobe treatments. This layered quality ascribes the home with a unique aesthetic, totally O'Keeffe's own. As O'Keeffe's home and studio for nearly 40 years, it was meticulously crafted to foster inspiration, contemplation, and artistic innovation.

Despite her being miles from design hubs New York or Chicago, O'Keeffe's connections with furniture and textile designers, coupled with her keen sense of style, resulted in a dynamic space in which she could experiment with color, pattern, and texture. In this exhibition, we invite you to learn about O'Keeffe's mid-century–modern home, which continues to inspire designers and design enthusiasts to this day.

The Artful Living: O'Keeffe & Modern Design exhibition, curated by Giustina Renzoni, is on view at the O'Keeffe Welcome Center in Abiquiú, New Mexico from April 2, 2024 through April 1, 2025. The exhibition is free and open to the general public. Even if you aren't able to visit the exhibition, we hope this Exhibition Guide offers a glimpse into O'Keeffe's approach making her Abiquiú home one that continues to inspire designers and design enthusiasts to this day.

BARWA Lounger by Edgar Bartolucci and John Waldheim, 1940s



Edgar Bartolucci and John Waldheim, BARWA Associates. BARWA chair, 1940s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton. Photography by Brad Trone.

Moving from New York's chaotic urban environment to New Mexico gave O'Keeffe the opportunity to embrace leisure and relaxation—a postwar concept for many. The BARWA lounge, designed by Edgar Bartolucci and John Waldheim, turned out to be the perfect place for O'Keeffe to enjoy two of her favorite activities: listening to classical music in her sitting room, and stargazing outside in the desert. After purchasing one from the company in 1949, she subsequently ordered several more for both her Abiquiú and Ghost Ranch homes.

Akari 55A Lantern by Isamu Noguchi, 1960s



Isamu Noguchi. Akari 55A Lantern, 20th Century. 2024 reproduction on view. Photography by Brad Trone.

In the later part of her life, O'Keeffe struck up a friendship with Japanese American artist and designer Isamu Noguchi. The two shared a mutual appreciation for each other's work—so much so that when Noguchi gifted one of his famous Akari lanterns to O'Keeffe it became the only permanent light fixture in the home besides exposed light bulbs. O'Keeffe had the lantern installed over her dining table with a pulley system purchased at a local hardware store, so that it could be raised or lowered depending on what type of lighting she desired.

B.K.F. Chair by Antonio Bonet, Juan Kurchan, and Jorge Ferrari Hardoy, 1930s



"Grupo Austral (Antonio Bonet, Juan Kurchan and Jorge Ferrari Hardoy) for Knoll Associates. B.K.F. (Butterfly) Chair, 20th c. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton. Photography by Brad Trone.

This chair was originally designed in 1938 by architects Antonio Bonet, Juan Kurchan, and Jorge Ferrari Hardoy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and was originally known as the BKF chair. The name "Butterfly" chair comes from its form, which consists of a suspended leather or canvas sling draped over a simple metal frame, the result resembling the wings of a butterfly. In many instances, O'Keeffe considered objects in her home to be more than mere furniture, appreciating them for their craftsmanship and form. This Butterfly chair was O'Keeffe's favorite place to sit and enjoy her patio. When the chair was not in use, she often removed its cover to admire the sculptural quality of the chair frame itself.

Womb Chair & Ottoman by Eero Saarinen, 1940s



Eero Saarinen for Knoll. Womb Chair and Ottoman, 1948. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Catherine and Earl Krueger Family in memory of Catherine Klenert, sister of Georgia O'Keeffe. Photography by Brad Trone.

Originally marketed as the Model 70, Eero Saarinen eventually renamed his design the Womb chair due to its organic and plush form. Using the molded form technology popular in the midcentury, the soft curves and deep seat allow the chair to envelop its sitter, while the accompanying ottoman allows the sitter to recline for optimal comfort. O'Keeffe's chair was often kept in her sitting room – a place designed for contemplation and relaxation.

The Womb Chair and Ottoman are not on view in the exhibition as they are part of the Historic Home Tour.

Chemex Coffeemaker by Peter Schlumbohm, 1950s



Peter Schlumbohm for Chemex Corp. Chemex Coffemaker, 1950s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton. Photography by Addison Doty.

Designed by German inventor, Peter Schlumbohm, the Chemex coffee maker hit the American market in the 1940s and quickly gained an iconic level of recognition. The Chemex coffee maker perfectly embodies the marriage between form and function – a hallmark of midcentury modern design. After trying many coffee makers, O'Keeffe settled on the Chemex as her favorite. Its ease of use and beautiful design turned O'Keeffe's daily habit of making coffee into an enjoyable ritual.

MK172 Dining Chair by Mogens Kold, 1960s



Mogens Kold Mobelfabrik. MK172 Mogens Kold Dining Chair, 1960s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton. Photography by Brad Trone.

Influenced by the principles of simplicity, functionality, and minimalism, Scandinavian design offered a refreshing departure from the ornate styles of the past. The clean lines, natural materials, and emphasis on craftsmanship resonated with postwar America's desire for a modern, uncluttered aesthetic. The Scandinavian look became synonymous with a modern lifestyle, contributing its widespread appeal.

Mogens Kold Mobelfabrik became one of Denmark's most recognized furniture designers. The MK172 chair embodied the high-quality craftsmanship and the clean, minimalist forms Scandinavian design is known for. Presented at the Scandinavian Furniture Fair in 1967, the MK172 was a hit with its rich rosewood and upholstered black leather.

Textiles by Alexander Girard, 1960s



Alexander Girard. Pillow made with textile in 'Snake' print, 1960s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation. Photography by Brad Trone.

O'Keeffe, the architect and designer Alexander Girard, and his wife, Susan, shared a profound, four-decade-long friendship in which the three spent much time together in New Mexico and traveling the world. Their friendship further blossomed with a mutual exchange of design sensibilities.

Girard, a renowned textile designer and folk-art collector, influenced O'Keeffe's home décor with his own inspirational designs and network of creative minds at the Herman Miller company. Herman Miller established itself as the primary purveyor of modern furniture and textiles in the mid-century, employing many of the designers featured in this exhibition, including Charles and Ray Eames, Isamu Noguchi, and Eero Saarinen.

Upholstered Side Chair (LSR) by Ray and Charles Eames, 1950s



Charles and Ray Eames for Herman Miller. Upholstered Side Chair (LSR) by Ray and Charles Eames, 1950s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Catherine and Earl Krueger Family in memory of Catherine Klenert, sister of Georgia O'Keeffe.



Charles and Ray Eames for Herman Miller. Upholstered Side Chair (LSR) by Ray and Charles Eames, 1950s. (Detail: Label) Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Catherine and Earl Krueger Family in memory of Catherine Klenert, sister of Georgia O'Keeffe. Photography by Brad Trone.

Having met Ray and Charles Eames through their mutual friend, Alexander Girard, O'Keeffe developed a friendship of their own. In 1979, this chair was gifted to O'Keeffe for her 92nd birthday from Ray Eames. The previous year, Charles Eames passed away and Ray subsequently closed the studio. The upholstered LSR chair (Low Height Side Chair on Rod Base) was possibly one of the many prototypes Ray distributed during this time. While O'Keeffe was initially skeptical of the petite chair, after sitting in, she determined she liked the chair so much, that she needed to ask Ray for another one.

The Eames side chair is not on view in the exhibition as it is on view in the Making a Life exhibition at the O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe.

Molded Plywood Chair (LCW) by Ray and Charles Eames, 1940s



Charles and Ray Eames for Herman Miller. LCW Plywood Lounge Side Chair, 1946. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Catherine and Earl Krueger Family in memory of Catherine Klenert, sister of Georgia O'Keeffe. Photography by Brad Trone.

O'Keeffe's friendship with design visionaries Ray and Charles Eames was fueled by her admiration for their innovative furniture. Pioneers of midcentury modern design, the Eames duo captured O'Keeffe's aesthetic sensibilities with their iconic pieces. The Eames' contributions resonated deeply with O'Keeffe's ethos, reflecting affordable, experimental, and practical design. O'Keeffe placed several Eames chairs throughout her homes, including the LCW. The first chair design in the plywood series, the LCW is a mainstay in midcentury modern design. The bent plywood technology was first developed by the Eames during WWII – a result of a government funded project to create a more effective leg splint for soldiers. After the war, the Eames studio used this technology to make some of its most enduring furniture designs.

Vostra Chair by Jens Risom, 1950s



Jens Risom for Knoll Associates. Vostra Chair. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton. Photography by Brad Trone.

Danish-American Jens Risom partnered with German-American Hans Knoll to create the Knoll Furniture Company – one of the first furniture companies to produce Scandinavian designs in the United States. The initial line released in the 1950s included the Vostra Chair. Its ergonomic shape and simple design made it a popular choice for casual seating. Initially designed with canvas webbing, another iteration designed with foam cushions allowed the Knoll company to offer the chair with a variety of upholstery patterns. O'Keeffe purchased one with a busy brown and white pattern but when she tired of the upholstery, she used a white linen cover.

Marimekko dresses & fabrics, 1960s



Marimekko Dresses from left to right: Annika Rimala for Marimekko. 'Varjo' Dress in 'Lanketti' Print, 1963-65. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton. Annika Rimala for Marimekko. 'Karutakki' Dress in 'Nadja', 1961. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton. Annika Rimala for Marimekko. 'Asumistakki' Dress in 'Galleria', 1963. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton. Photography by Brad Trone.

When the designs of the Finnish textile, clothing, and houseware company Marimekko entered the American fashion vernacular in the 1960s, the brand was quickly adopted by the intelligentsia for its focus on comfort, function, and modern textile patterns. Even in rural New Mexico, O'Keeffe stayed up to date on fashion trends, and Marimekko's popular designs were perfect for her lifestyle. The co-founder Armi Ratia stated, "Our clothes must be loose and express movement ... They are part of modern interiors and modern life!"

While Marimekko textiles are often recognized for their saturated color palettes and busy patterns, O'Keeffe opted for the more subdued pieces featured here. The light cotton fabric kept her cool in the summer, and the loose fit allowed her to move with ease as she explored the desert landscape. Additionally, the pockets offered the perfect places for O'Keeffe to store the rocks she picked up on her daily walks.

Marimekko dresses also played an important role in O'Keeffe's carefully honed image. When trying to achieve a more candid persona in photographs, she often wore a Marimekko dress, appearing relaxed and casual— as opposed to the iconic black wrap dresses she donned for many formal portraits. The first photographer to capture her in a Marimekko dress was her good friend, Todd Webb.

Marimekko did not only bring fun patterns and saturated colors to Americans' closets, but the company also produced homeware textiles as well. O'Keeffe used Marimekko oilcloths, a type of fabric made waterproof with a coating of boiled linseed oil, to cover tables and cooking surfaces in her kitchen. Although she often embraced neutral color palettes and minimalism in her interior decor, O'Keeffe always incorporated a pop of bright color or the occasional busy pattern in a room.

Pedestal Table and Tulip Chair by Eero Saarinen, 1950s



O'Keeffe sits in the Tulip chair in this 1977 photograph by Todd Webb. Todd Webb. O'Keeffe in Her Studio - Abiquiu, N.M., 1977. Gelatin silver print, 8 5/16 x 6 inches. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation. © Todd Webb Archive.



Eero Saarinen. Pedestal Table, 20th century. 2018 reproduction. Photography by Brad Trone.

Eero Saarinen's minimalist designs were so appealing to O'Keeffe that she had at least three pieces in her collection – a pedestal table, a tulip chair, and a womb chair. A significant departure from tradition, Saarinen's Pedestal Table uses a single, sleek leg to support a round top. Similarly, the Tulip Chair sits on an identical sleek leg. Saarinen strove to simplify these objects reducing them down to their most essential, eschewing the ubiquitous 4-leg form which he deemed too busy. O'Keeffe took a similar approach in much of her abstract art, reducing subject matter to its most essential.

The Tulip Chair is not on view in the exhibition as it is part of the Historic Home Tour.

Copco Tea Kettle by Michael Lax, 1960s



Michael Lax for Copco produced by Dansk. Enamel Tea Kettle, 1960s . Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton. Photography by Brad Trone.

When it debuted, Copco's iconic enamel kettle with a teak handle was championed for its simple design, its durability, and its use of new material technologies. The combination of pressed sheet metal, porcelain enamel, and bent laminated wood resulted in a revolutionary design that continues to be prevalent in kitchens today. As an avid tea drinker, O'Keeffe owned dozens of tea kettles and tea pots, but the durability of the kettle designed by Michael Lax made it ideal for daily use.

Ruska ceramics by Ulla Procopé for Arabia, 1960s



Ulla Procopé for Arabia. Ruska Mugs, 1960s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Catherine and Earl Krueger Family in memory of Catherine Klenert, sister of Georgia O'Keeffe. Photography by Brad Trone.

The first oven safe dishware marketed by Finnish design company, Arabia, the Ruska line continues to be one of their most popular. O'Keeffe preferred these dishes above all others because one could easily put a plate in the oven to heat up a meal or it could be used for baking. Its durability made it an obvious choice for daily use and its unique earthy, brown glaze gave these dishes a rustic look.

Krenit Bowl by Herbert Krenchel, 1950s



Herbert Krenchel for Dansk. Krenit Bowl, 1950s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Catherine and Earl Krueger Family in memory of Catherine Klenert, sister of Georgia O'Keeffe. Photography by Brad Trone.

Danish civil engineer and materials research, Herbert Krenchel, developed a bowl using pressed steel and vibrant enamel coating. The use of enamel coating was a departure from standard practice at the time, as it was almost exclusively used for more industrial products such as road signs. The bowl combined aesthetic appeal with functional durability resulting in a minimalist yet striking design. In addition to becoming a staple in Danish homes, Krenit bowls became one of the top homeware exports, making its way to many American tables. While the bowls could be used in many ways, it was marketed as the perfect salad bowl. O'Keeffe's plant-forward diet included many salads, made with produce from her garden or locally foraged greens. The Krenit bowl became her go-to salad bowl.

Luxo Lamp by Jac Jacobsen, 1930s



Jac Jacobsen. Luxo Lamp, 1960s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton. Photography by Brad Trone.

Norwegian designer Jac Jacobsen designed the Luxo lamp in the 1930s, eventually licensing the design for production outside of Europe. Its practicality and industrial form contribute to its enduring popularity and is often considered the best work light ever created. When Pixar released its animated short, *Luxo Jr.*, in 1986, the Luxo lamp took on new cultural significance and Pixar adopted the lamp as the company's mascot.

The Luxo lamp is not on view in the exhibition as it is part of the Historic Home Tour.

Bird Lounge Chair & Ottoman by Harry Bertoia, 1952



Harry Bertoia for Knoll. Bird Lounge Chair & Ottoman, 1952. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Catherine and Earl Krueger Family in memory of Catherine Klenert, sister of Georgia O'Keeffe. Photography by Brad Trone.

As a jewelry maker and sculptor, developing a molded wire frame chair was a natural progression for Italian-American designer Harry Bertoia. The Bird chair exemplifies Bertoia's interest in space, form, and the characteristics of metal. Like many other molded lounge chairs of the era, the Bird chair was a departure from pre-war furniture with its extreme comfort and ergonomic shape. Bertoia's signature wire mesh frame gave the Bird chair a light and airy quality.

The Bird Lounge and Ottoman are not on view in the exhibition as they are part of the Historic Home Tour.

Exhibition Checklist

OBJECTS FROM THE O'KEEFFE MUSEUM COLLECTION

Annika Rimala for Marimekko. 'Karutakkj' Dress in 'Nadja', 1961. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

Annika Rimala for Marimekko. 'Asumistakki' Dress in 'Galleria', 1963. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

Annika Rimala for Marimekko. 'Varjo' Dress in 'Lanketti' Print, 1963-65. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

Charles and Ray Eames for Herman Miller. LCW Plywood Lounge Side Chair, 1946. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Catherine and Earl Krueger Family in memory of Catherine Klenert, sister of Georgia O'Keeffe.

Edgar Bartolucci and John Waldheim, BARWA Associates. BARWA chair, 1940s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

Herbert Krenchel for Dansk. Krenit Bowl, 1950s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Catherine and Earl Krueger Family in memory of Catherine Klenert, sister of Georgia O'Keeffe.

Grupo Austral (Antonio Bonet, Juan Kurchan and Jorge Ferrari Hardoy) for Knoll Associates. B.K.F. (Butterfly) Chair, 20th c. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

Jac Jacobsen. Luxo Lamp, 1960s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

Jens Risom for Knoll. 'Vostra' Armchair w/brown and white upholstery, 1940s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

Maija Isola for Marimekko. Unikko Oil Cloth, ca. 1965. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation.

Marimekko. Black & White Check Fabric, 1960s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum.

Michael Lax for Copco produced by Dansk. Enamel Tea Kettle, 1960s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

Mogens Kold Mobelfabrik. MK172 Mogens Kold Dining Chair, 1960s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

Peter Schlumbohm for Chemex Corp. Chemex Coffemaker, 1950s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

Ulla Procopé for Arabia. Ruska Mugs, 1960. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of Catherine and Earl Krueger Family in memory of Catherine Klenert, sister of Georgia O'Keeffe.

Ulla Procopé for Arabia. Ruska Dishes, 1960s. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. Gift of the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation.

Jens Risom for Knoll Associates. Vostra Chair. Gift of Juan and Anna Marie Hamilton.

REPRODUCTIONS IN THE EXHIBITION

This exhibition includes several reproductions because collection objects remained in the historic home or were not appropriate for installation in the Welcome Center.

Balthazar Korab. Abiquiú House, Indian Room, ca. 1965. Photo reproduction.

Balthazar Korab. Abiquiú House, Sitting Room, ca. 1965. Photo reproduction.

Don Worth. Georgia O'Keeffe with Chair, 1958. Photo reproduction.

Eero Saarinen. Pedestal Table, 20th century. 2018 reproduction.

Isamu Noguchi. Akari 55A Lantern, 20th Century. 2024 reproduction on view.

John Loengard. Grooming Dogs, 1966. Photo reproduction.

Myron Wood. The Great South Windows, 1980. Photo reproduction.

Myron Wood. Mobile by Alexander Calder, 1980. Photo reproduction..

Todd Webb. Georgia O'Keeffe and Chows in Abiquiú Garden, ca. 1962. Photo reproduction.

Todd Webb. Georgia O'Keeffe in Abiquiú House, Living Room, ca. 1962. Photo reproduction.

Todd Webb. Georgia O'Keeffe in Abiquiú House, Living Room, ca. 1962. Photo reproduction.

Todd Webb. O'Keeffe in Her Studio, Abiquiú, N.M., 1977. Photo reproduction.

About This Publication

The theme and content of this publication were conceived and organized by Liz Neely, curator of digital experience, and Giustina Renzoni, curator of historic properties, with input from other members of the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum's team, including Liz O'Brien, digital experience and rights manager, and Lydia Davis, Kress interpretive fellow, and Kristin Breeze, graphic designer. Giustina Renzoni authored the texts in the publication.

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