

Pita Lopez to Retire from Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

*Lopez Joins Board of Trustees After 50-Year Career Working
for the Artist, Foundation, and Museum*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—December 2, 2024—(Santa Fe, NM)— For 50 years, Agapita “Pita” Judy Lopez has been a touchstone on the property Georgia O’Keeffe called home in Abiquiú, NM. On December 31st her retirement from the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum will be official, ending a career that started in 1974. The former personal companion and secretary to the world-renowned artist has served many roles dedicated to the legacy of Georgia O’Keeffe including Director of the Georgia O’Keeffe Foundation and, most recently, Projects Director for Abiquiú Historic Properties.

To recognize Pita’s enormous impact on the organization and to honor her contributions, Pita was named an Honorary Member of the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Board of Trustees in October. She shares this honor with former First Lady Laura Bush, Co-Founder John L. Marion, and only four others.

The overarching influence Pita has had on the Museum stems back three generations of the Lopez family who have worked for O’Keeffe and encompasses the experience and knowledge of many family members, immediate and extended. Her grandfather Estiben Suazo was a gardener and groundskeeper while her mother, Candelaria Lopez, was a housekeeper and cook. Pita’s brothers Margarito, Belarmino, and the late Joseph Lopez worked for O’Keeffe when she was alive as maintenance and groundskeepers, while Belarmino also assisted with her artwork. Her father, Fernando and sister, Frances, and other relatives also worked for O’Keeffe. Margarito, Belarmino, and a third brother Steve have all worked as Maintenance Specialists at the Home & Studio for the Museum.



Agapita “Pita” Lopez

“The Lopez Family’s remarkable impact on the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum cannot be understated and Pita is an unmistakably vital part of that rich family tradition. Pita has remained a pillar of expertise and legacy-keeping. Everyone at the Museum has learned from Pita and we are forever grateful for her generosity in sharing her insight,

knowledge, and experiences with us for so many years,” Museum Director Cody Hartley said. “She will be missed dearly by myself and her colleagues and we wish her the best in retirement.”

The list of Pita’s professional accomplishments is long and significant.

- After caring for O’Keeffe in the winter of 1974, she began to work for the artist full-time in 1978 until her death in 1986, Pita continued working with the O’Keeffe Estate, and then in 1989 with the Georgia O’Keeffe Foundation as its Secretary. She served as the Foundation’s Executive Director from 1999 to 2006.
- In the late 1990s, Pita traveled with former Director of the Georgia O’Keeffe Foundation Elizabeth Glassman to Washington, DC. There they delivered O’Keeffe’s *Mountain at Bear Lake–Taos*, 1930, to First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. It was the first painting by a 20th-century American woman artist to be exhibited in a White House state room.
- In 1998, Pita was a key advocate in securing recognition for the Home & Studio as a National Historic Landmark and she is currently working to add the Ghost Ranch home to the registry.
- Pita has worked for the Museum since 2006 overseeing the maintenance and preservation of both of O’Keeffe’s New Mexico homes, and the seasonal tours offered at the Abiquiú Home & Studio.
- In 2012, Lopez co-authored the book *Georgia O’Keeffe and Her Houses: Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu* with Barbara Buhler Lynes.
- With her brother, Belarmino Lopez, Pita received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division in 2015.
- Pita founded and continues to lead the Abiquiú Garden Project, helping Northern New Mexico high school students learn leadership and teamwork skills while tending to O’Keeffe’s garden. The program produces hundreds of pounds of fresh produce donated to local food banks annually and welcomed its tenth class of interns in 2024.
- Pita has been recognized for her work as a member of the Abiquiú Acequia Association and the Abiquiú Land Grant.

To continue the work to which Pita has dedicated her career, including the preservation of the Home & Studio in Abiquiú and O’Keeffe’s home at Ghost Ranch, Giustina Renzoni has stepped into the role of Director of Historic Properties, expanding on her previous role of Curator of Historic Properties at the Museum.

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ABOUT THE GEORGIA O'KEEFFE MUSEUM: Since 1997, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum celebrates the art, life, and independent spirit of Georgia O'Keeffe. Located in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where Georgia O'Keeffe lived the final decades of her life, the O'Keeffe has sites and experiences in two historic destinations, Santa Fe and Abiquiú. For more information, please visit gokm.org