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Blockbuster exhibition at the Fine Arts Center showcases O’Keeffe and Southwest

COLORADO SPRINGS (April 15, 2015) — The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center will be one of only four stops in the U.S., and the only venue in this region, to host the international traveling exhibition, *Eloquent Objects: Georgia O’Keeffe and Still-Life Art in New Mexico, June 27–Sept. 13*. This new exhibition will include more than 40 magnificent paintings by O’Keeffe and her contemporaries — artists she influenced and artists who influenced her. Many of these works are on loan from private collections and have been rarely seen. This exhibition was organized by Joseph S. Czestochowski; produced by International Arts®; curated by Charles C. Eldredge, former director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and currently Hall Distinguished Professor of American Art at the University of Kansas.

New Mexico, America's fabled Land of Enchantment, has inspired artists for generations, especially Georgia O’Keeffe. In 1929, she made the first of two decades of trips to New Mexico, eventually moving there fulltime in 1949. In addition to the paintings of the high desert landscape for which she is well known, that initial sojourn inspired colorful and soulful still lifes, souvenirs of a place that would inspire her for the balance of a long and productive career.

We have come to think of still lifes as arranged, inanimate, and mostly commonplace objects, such as fruit displayed in bowls. Looking beyond the literal and the representational, O’Keeffe and other Modernists found new modes of visual expression, drawn from that rich, sun-drenched New Mexican landscape. Flowers were transformed into basic elements of lines, shape and color. Even landscapes and street scenes molded into this new kind of abstracted still life.

Eloquent Objects, indeed. They speak volumes about Modernism as seen through a Southwestern lens. This exhibition digs into the roots of O’Keeffe’s work and that of her contemporaries, who, in the early 20th century, founded artist colonies in Santa Fe, Taos and Colorado Springs.

Artists in the exhibition range from the pioneering generation to mid-century arrivals. They include Modernists long associated with New Mexico (Joseph Henry Sharp, Raymond Jonson, Victor Higgins), as well as those who found inspiration during visits there (Marsden Hartley). Artists associated with the Works Progress Administration’s (WPA) art programs of the 1930s will be included, as will those independent of the largely Anglo art colonies.

While the exhibition features this range of outstanding artists, O’Keeffe is a central figure to the exhibition, as well as to the genre, the locale and her era. Recently named one of the 100 most significant Americans in history by Smithsonian Magazine, O’Keeffe has left an imprint on the art world and on our culture more profoundly than any other female American artist.

“This memorable exhibition and related programming will stimulate our community's imagination, creativity and sense of regional pride,” says Executive Museum Director and Chief Curator, Blake Milteer. “It also has the potential as a cultural beacon to draw enthusiastic audiences from a multi-state area.”

Elsewhere in our galleries during the exhibition, the FAC will further celebrate the remarkable work of O'Keeffe and her contemporaries, displaying paintings by WPA artists and an elegant O'Keeffe painting from the FAC's permanent collection.

Visitors will notice that the roots of this enchanting exhibition reach deeply into the foundational history of the Fine Arts Center. The incorporation of supportive artwork and interpretive displays will further illuminate those connections.

Eloquent Objects: Georgia O'Keeffe and Still-Life Art in New Mexico will serve as the premier event of *The Year of Georgia O'Keeffe*, a celebration that also features a photography exhibition by Myron Wood, themed classes at the FAC's Bemis School of Art, our Black Iris Ball and an array of community activities.

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