

# NYBG

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## **The New York Botanical Garden Announces its Major 2018 Exhibition, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Visions of Hawai'i, Exploring the Artist's Immersion in the Hawaiian Islands in 1939***

A Lush Conservatory Flower Show Will Evoke the Hawaiian Gardens and Landscapes That Inspired O'Keeffe

More Than 15 O'Keeffe Paintings Not Seen Together in New York Since Their 1940 Debut Will Be on Display in the Art Gallery

On View May 19–October 28, 2018



Harold Stein, *Georgia O'Keeffe in Hawaii*, 1939. Gelatin silver print, 5 x 4.5 inches. Gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, NM, USA. [2006.6.0754]



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Heliconia—Crab's Claw Ginger*, 1939. Oil on canvas, 19 x 16 inches. Collection of Sharon Twigg-Smith.

**Bronx, NY**—The New York Botanical Garden announces its major 2018 exhibition, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Visions of Hawai'i*, focusing on the iconic artist's immersion in the Hawaiian Islands in 1939. Opening on May 19, 2018, exhibition visitors will experience a lush flower show in the Botanical Garden's Enid A. Haupt Conservatory evoking the gardens and landscapes that inspired O'Keeffe as well as the complex story of the flora and unique ecology of Hawai'i. Curated by art historian Theresa Papanikolas, Ph.D., of the Honolulu Museum of Art, the exhibition will feature more than 15 original O'Keeffe paintings not seen together in New York since their 1940 debut. Visitors of all ages will learn about Hawai'i through complementary events, programs, and demonstrations such as a film series, lectures, readings, and an interactive guide.

In 1939, at the age of 51, O’Keeffe accepted a commission from the Hawaiian Pineapple Company to produce two paintings for advertising campaigns. Her nine-week immersion in the Hawaiian landscape resulted in more than 20 paintings, including stunning views of the mountains and waterfalls and her signature close-cropped views of flowers and plants she encountered during her time on the islands of Hawai’i, Kauai, Maui, and Oahu. At the time of her trip, O’Keeffe was among the most famous artists in the United States, best known for her depictions of the stark landscape and desert flora of her beloved New Mexico. *Georgia O’Keeffe: Visions of Hawai’i*, will explore this lesser-known chapter in her career, the enduring cultural impact of mid-century perceptions of Hawai’i, and the ecological complexity of the Hawaiian Islands—one of the most biologically diverse places on Earth—hidden behind O’Keeffe’s depictions. Integrating art, horticulture, and historical interpretation, the exhibition will explore the Hawai’i that O’Keeffe encountered and also reveal the complex history of the plants and the Islands that she was not familiar with at the time.

### **Hawai’i in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory**

The landmark Enid A. Haupt Conservatory will feature the remarkable beauty and richness of Hawai’i’s wild and cultivated flora. Designed by Tony Award-winning set designer Scott Pask, the exhibition will also introduce visitors to the profound importance of plants in Hawaiian culture and growing concerns about threats to native Hawaiian plants. The centerpiece will be long borders of colorful tropical garden plants such as those Georgia O’Keeffe encountered and painted while in Hawai’i. These borders will burst with the dazzling flowers of ti, frangipani, bougainvillea, heliconia, hibiscus, bird of paradise, ginger, and many more tropical favorites. Beyond the borders, planting beds arranged around a *hale*, an open-sided thatched-roof pavilion inspired by traditional Hawaiian architecture, will tell the story of canoe plants—useful plants brought to the Islands 1,700 years ago by Polynesian settlers. Vignettes featuring native Hawaiian plants will teach visitors about modern efforts to preserve Hawai’i’s imperiled flora.

### **Georgia O’Keeffe’s Works in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library Art Gallery**

A stunning display in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library Art Gallery will offer a rare focus on Georgia O’Keeffe’s paintings created during a three-month sojourn commissioned by the Hawaiian Pineapple Company (now Dole) in 1939. Her works depicting Hawaiian subjects garnered critical and popular attention when they were exhibited at Alfred Stieglitz’s (1864–1946) An American Place gallery in 1940. The exhibition will spotlight a transformative time in the legendary artist’s life, revealing O’Keeffe’s deeply felt impressions of the sites that instilled a lifelong affection for the Islands’ rugged topography, dramatic landscapes, and exotic plants.

The paintings in this grouping, not seen together in New York since their 1940 debut, were all created in 1939 and include *Heliconia—Crab’s Claw Ginger* [plant depicted is actually a “lobster claw” heliconia] and *Pineapple Bud* (both of which were used in the Hawaiian Pineapple Company’s advertisements and which are held today in private collections); *Hibiscus with Plumeria* (loaned by the Smithsonian American Art Museum); and a collection of landscape paintings depicting Maui’s interior ‘Iao Valley and lava-studded shorelines (loaned by the Honolulu Museum of Art).

### **Programming Throughout the Garden**

A rich program of performances, events, and activities throughout the Garden, for adults and children, will celebrate the diverse cultural traditions of Hawai‘i past and present, as well as the beauty and variety of Hawai‘i’s flora. During the summer, evening programs will celebrate the culture that captured Georgia O’Keeffe’s imagination. Festive weekends throughout the time of the exhibition will celebrate Hawai‘i and include live music, performances of hula and chant, and artisan demonstrations of lei and poi making.

A scholarly symposium, lectures and a film series, and live performances of the music and dance of Hawai‘i are also among the planned programming.

In the Everett Children’s Adventure Garden, children and their families will be introduced to plants represented in O’Keeffe’s paintings and tropical food plants of Hawai‘i. Families will receive field notebooks and follow a trail, observing and drawing nature as O’Keeffe did in her work. Children will explore the botanical science of plant structure and create paintings.

### **About Georgia O’Keeffe’s Hawai‘i Paintings**

American modernist Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986) conveyed a distinct sense of place with innovative depictions of her surroundings, from stark New Mexican landscapes to abstract New York cityscapes. Her interest in depicting local landscapes through modern art techniques was grounded in an American tradition that dated to the 19th-century Hudson River School painters. Flowers and plants were also subjects that engaged O’Keeffe consistently throughout her career, and these iconic images are celebrated for their bold use of color, form, and scale.

O’Keeffe’s time in Hawai‘i, and the work that was produced there, is less well known than her iconic New Mexico scenes, and it is not a place with which she is often associated. However, close study of the work and her correspondence during her trip reveals a deep appreciation for the beauty of the Islands and a fascination with the landscape she encountered.

This engagement with a new place—and use of her familiar compositional techniques—shows extraordinary continuity with the rest of her large body of work. O’Keeffe’s experience in Hawai’i is representative of the significance of the Territory in the American consciousness as tourism boomed and Hawai’i approached statehood. While O’Keeffe’s correspondence from this period reflects the perspective of a visitor who was steeped in popular perceptions of the Islands as an idealized tropical paradise, her paintings masterfully depict the Islands’ unique natural settings and serve as a compelling starting point to examine the transformation of the Hawaiian landscape through human and cultural influences.

### **About Curator Theresa Papanikolas, Ph.D.**

Theresa Papanikolas, Ph.D., is Deputy Director of Art and Programs and Curator of European and American Art at the Honolulu Museum of Art, where she oversees the museum’s educational programs, Art School, library, installations team, and permanent collection. Since coming to the museum in 2008, she has led an innovative reinstallation of its holdings in European and American art and organized the exhibitions *From Whistler to Warhol: Modernism on Paper* (2010), *Georgia O’Keeffe and Ansel Adams: The Hawai’i Pictures* (2013), *Art Deco Hawai’i* (2014), and *Abstract Expressionism: Looking East from the Far West* (2017), and she has helped position the museum as the cultural hub of one of the country’s most diverse metropolitan areas. From 2006 to 2008, Dr. Papanikolas was Wallis Annenberg Curatorial Fellow at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where she organized *Doctrinal Nourishment: Art and Anarchism in the Time of James Ensor* (2008) and helped plan *Drawing Surrealism* (2012). She has also held positions at Rice University, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. She has an expertise in 19th- and 20th-century art, and has published widely on Dada and Surrealism. She holds degrees in Art History from University of the Southern California (BA) and the University of Delaware (MA, Ph.D.), and has completed a Fellowship at the Center for Curatorial Leadership (2016).

*Georgia O’Keeffe: Visions of Hawai’i* is The New York Botanical Garden’s next installation within the ambitious exhibition program it pioneered to explore the horticultural lives of cultural figures such as Frida Kahlo, Charles Darwin, Emily Dickinson, and Claude Monet and the intersection of art and nature.

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*Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.*

The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad, bus, or subway. The Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, and Tram Tour. For ticket pricing, please check our Web site. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit [nybg.org](http://nybg.org)

The New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458

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