

NYBG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 23, 2018

Plans Revealed for The New York Botanical Garden's Landmark Exhibition, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Visions of Hawai'i*, On View May 19 Through October 28, 2018

Exploring the Artist's Immersion in the Hawaiian Islands in 1939, Exhibition Will Feature a Lush Flower Show Evoking the Hawaiian Gardens and Landscapes That Inspired O'Keeffe And More Than 15 of Her Paintings Not Seen Together in New York Since Their 1940 Debut

Tickets On Sale Now



Harold Stein, [Georgia O'Keeffe on Leho'ula Beach, near 'Aleamāi, Hāna, Maui], 1939, Gelatin silver print, 2 x 2⁷/₈ in., Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Hibiscus with Plumeria*, 1939, Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in., Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Sam Rose and Julie Walters, 2004.30.6 © 2018 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Bronx, NY—The New York Botanical Garden's landmark 2018 exhibition, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Visions of Hawai'i*, will focus on the iconic artist's immersion in the Hawaiian Islands in 1939. At a preview luncheon on January 23 at Grand Hyatt New York, Botanical Garden experts and the exhibition curator shared plans and background and announced that tickets are now on sale for the exhibition that will run from May 19 through October 28, 2018. Visitors will experience a lush flower show in the 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., Deputy Director of Art and Programs and Curator of European and American Art at the Honolulu Museum of Art, the exhibition will feature 20 of O'Keeffe's depictions of Hawai'i—including paintings not seen together in New York since their 1940 debut. Visitors of all ages will learn

about Hawai'i through complementary events and programs, including a scholarly symposium, an original short film, a film series, and the Interactive Mobile Guide.

In 1939, at the age of 51, O'Keeffe traveled on commission to Hawai'i to produce images for a Hawaiian Pineapple Company promotional campaign. Her nine weeks on O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i, and the Big Island of Hawai'i resulted in stunning depictions of mountains and waterfalls as well as her signature close-cropped views of flowers and plants she observed. 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 experienced and also reveal the complex history of the Hawaiian Islands that she was not familiar with at the time.

Hawai'i in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory

The Enid A. Haupt Conservatory will showcase the remarkable beauty and richness of Hawai'i's wild and cultivated flora. Featuring plantings designed by Francisca Coelho and set pieces designed by Tony Award-winning 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. Long borders of colorful tropical garden plants such as those Georgia O'Keeffe encountered and painted while in Hawai'i will include ti plant, frangipani, bougainvillea, heliconia, hibiscus, bird-of-paradise, ginger, and many more tropical favorites. Beyond the borders, planting beds arranged around an open-sided thatched-roof pavilion inspired by the traditional Hawaiian *hale* will tell the story of canoe plants—useful plants brought to the Islands 1,000 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 works of art created during a nine-week sojourn in 1939 while on commission to produce images for a Hawaiian Pineapple Company promotional campaign. 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 experience in the legendary artist's life, revealing O'Keeffe's deeply felt impressions and the enduring influence of the Islands' rugged topography, dramatic landscapes, and exotic plants.

The works 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 series of landscape paintings depicting Maui’s interior ‘īao Valley and lava-studded shorelines (loaned by the Honolulu Museum of Art).

Elsewhere in the Garden

In the Ross Gallery, enjoy *Georgia O’Keeffe: Voyage to Hawai’i*, a display highlighting the artist’s journey from her departure at New York’s Grand Central Terminal to her island-hopping explorations of exotic flora and lush landscapes.

The Britton Rotunda and Gallery will feature *Flora Hawaiiensis: Plants of Hawai’i*, tracing the history of Hawai’i’s flora, from unusual native plants, to those valued by the ancient Hawaiians, to the ornamental and agricultural plants O’Keeffe painted. Displays will showcase archival photos, letters, and maps from the LuEsther T. Mertz Library and specimens from the William and Lynda Steere Herbarium. The exhibit highlights the work of NYBG botanists in the Pacific Islands, including Collaborators in Hawaiian Botany, Drs. Otto and Isa Degener, who explored the flora of Hawai’i and worked to conserve its ecology in the same time period as O’Keeffe’s visit.

Outdoor installations by contemporary Hawaiian artist Mark Chai, inspired by the forms of the plants that O’Keeffe encountered while visiting Hawai’i, will be on view in the Leon Levy Visitor Center and along Garden Way, dramatically lit for evening events.

An ongoing poetry walk, organized in partnership with the Poetry Society of America, will explore the relationship between nature and people in the Hawaiian Islands. The poetry walk will highlight the work of contemporary poets in Hawai’i, including former U.S. Poet Laureate W.S. Merwin.

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 Aloha Nights, evening programs will spotlight the culture that captured Georgia O’Keeffe’s imagination. On select Celebrate Hawai’i Weekends, NYBG, in collaboration with

The Hawaiian Islands, will feature performers, artists, and artisans from Hawai'i, showcasing the time-honored traditions and unique cultural heritage of the Islands.

A scholarly symposium, an original short film, and a film series 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.

A visually stunning Interactive Mobile Guide will complement the exhibition by transporting users to both the current Hawaiian landscape and back in time to the Hawai'i that O'Keeffe visited. Features include 360-degree videos of the plants and locations O'Keeffe observed and depicted in her work; personal accounts found in O'Keeffe's handwritten letters; advanced location-aware technology that will help users engage with content automatically; and an interactive painting feature.

The exhibition catalog explores this little-known chapter in the artist's career. Glowing with color, O'Keeffe's Hawai'i pictures demonstrate her unique ability to make every place she painted her own. In addition to essays discussing O'Keeffe's depictions of Hawai'i and their significance in her oeuvre as a whole, this landmark volume offers a unique perspective by foregrounding the ecological complexity of the Hawaiian Islands—one of the most biologically diverse places on Earth—alongside her works of art. Available for purchase at NYBG Shop and at nybgpress.org

About Georgia O'Keeffe's Depictions of Hawai'i

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 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. This engagement with a new place—and use of her familiar compositional techniques—shows continuity with the rest of her large body of work.

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.

O’Keeffe’s visit to Hawai’i coincided with increasing awareness of the remote U.S. 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 curatorial department, educational programs, Art School, library, installations team, Visitor Information Center, 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.

###

EXHIBITION DONORS

Major Support provided by:

*LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust
The National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor
Gillian and Robert Steel*

Sponsored by:

*AERIN
Grand Hyatt New York
Hawaiian Airlines
The Hawaiian Islands
Hyatt Resorts in Hawaii:
Andaz Maui at Wailea Resort
Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa
Hyatt Regency Maui Resort and Spa
Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa*

Mobile Media supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies

Additional support provided by the Arthur F. and Alice E. Adams Charitable Foundation, Allwin Family Foundation, E.H.A. Foundation, Inc., Wolf Kahn and Emily Mason Foundation, Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature

Support for the Art Gallery Exhibition provided by The Kurt Berliner Foundation and Benjamin and Beth Hesse

The exhibition catalog is supported by the Wyeth Foundation for American Art.

Exhibitions in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory are made possible by the Estate of Enid A. Haupt.

Exhibitions in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library are made possible by the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust. Additional support for Mertz Library exhibitions has also been provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and by a Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Exhibitions in the Arthur and Janet Ross Gallery are made possible by support from the Arthur and Janet Ross Fund.

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

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

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

Contact: Gayle Snible at 718.817.8637/8616; gsnible@nybg.org
Nick Leshi at 718.817.8658; nleshi@nybg.org