Dear Educators:

Welcome to the Memorial Art Gallery! Thank you for joining us for our Teacher In-service, presented in conjunction with our current exhibition, Georgia O’Keeffe: Color and Conservation. Today’s program will focus on a variety of ways to bring this exhibit into your classroom. The exhibition will be open for you to visit and artists, writers and educators are offering mini-workshops throughout the building to help you make curriculum connections. Please see the reverse side of this sheet for a schedule of “what’s happening where” in the Gallery.

Materials in this packet include:

• Classroom materials based on the Memorial Art Gallery’s painting by Georgia O’Keeffe, Jawbone and Fungus (1931), which has been traveling with this exhibition

• A color transparency of Jawbone and Fungus for classroom use

• An essay on Jawbone and Fungus written by art historian and O’Keeffe scholar, Sarah Whitaker Peters, taken from the Gallery’s recent publication Seeing America: Painting and Sculpture from the Collection of the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester (2006)

• A selection of quotes – Georgia O’Keeffe: In Her Own Words – for classroom use

• A list of educational resources - most can be borrowed from the MAG Teacher Resource Center, located in our library

• Background information on Georgia O’Keeffe, her conservator Caroline Keck, and the correspondence between the two that inspired this exhibition

• A flier outlining some basic information on programs, hours and arranging school tours for this exhibition

• An evaluation form for today’s in-service

We hope that you enjoy your visit to the Gallery and will return with your students. Please let us know how you used today’s offerings in your classroom – we’d enjoy hearing from you!

Best,

Marlene Hamann-Whitmore
Curator of Education
473-7720, x3025

Carol S. Yost
Assistant Curator of Education
473-7720, x3051
The Memorial Art Gallery is pleased to present a significant yet previously unexplored aspect of the work of Georgia O'Keeffe. *Georgia O'Keeffe: Color and Conservation* examines the artist's consummate craftsmanship and her awareness of the role materials and process played in the presentation of her work for both the immediate future and for future generations.

The nearly forty-year correspondence between Georgia O'Keeffe and conservator Caroline Keck is central to this exhibition. Twenty-seven original O'Keeffe paintings and pastels are a testament to the connection between the creative process and art conservation. Text panels, conservation annotations, and excerpts from the correspondence accompany the artworks. In addition, photographs of O'Keeffe punctuate the exhibition. Included are images taken by Alfred Stieglitz, of O'Keeffe in Lake George and New York City, and photographs by O'Keeffe's friend Todd Webb, offering a glimpse of the artist in her beloved New Mexico. We welcome you to enjoy this previously private dimension of Georgia O'Keeffe's creative world.

Georgia O'Keeffe's concern with the integrity of her art's construction and preservation is rare among artists. Not only was she involved in conserving her existing pieces, she was also aware that her working methods would have an effect on the stability and longevity of her paintings and pastels. O'Keeffe's attention to detail is evident in her letters to conservator Caroline Keck about proper procedures related to the preservation of her work as well as in her requests regarding paintings already damaged. The correspondence—shared with the public for the first time—reveals the process of conserving the artist's work, from Keck's professional opinion and description of treatments to O'Keeffe's active participation in the ongoing conservation of her artwork. The dialogue between the two women ranges from professional to personal and tracks their relationship across four decades.
About Georgia O’Keeffe

Georgia O’Keeffe was born November 15, 1887, near Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. From an early age she showed an interest in art. Self-taught first at her parents’ dairy farm home, she later took art lessons from a local watercolorist. In 1902 the O’Keeffe family moved to Williamsburg, Virginia. Georgia O’Keeffe continued her artistic pursuits there as a high school student. In the fall of 1905 she entered The School of the Art Institute of Chicago for a year, and from 1907 to 1908 she attended classes at The Art Students League in New York, studying with the painter William Merritt Chase. In June of 1908 she won the League’s William Merritt Chase still-life prize for her oil painting *Untitled (Dead Rabbit with Copper Pot)*, which allowed her to attend the Outdoor School at Lake George, New York that summer.

After a four-year span of teaching at various institutions, O’Keeffe attended a class for art teachers at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville in the summer of 1912. Her instructor, Alon Bement, introduced her to the teachings of his mentor, the innovative artist and art educator Arthur Wesley Dow (1857–1922). Dow believed in the Japanese system of light and dark, or *notan*, and that the goal of an artist was self-expression through the harmonious arrangement of light and color. Bement’s instruction coupled with Dow’s philosophy revolutionized O’Keeffe’s thinking about art and subsequently her own artwork.

In 1915 O’Keeffe sent a series of abstract charcoal drawings to her friend Anita Pollitzer, who showed the works to Alfred Stieglitz, an influential photographer and gallery owner living in New York City. These drawings, probably inspired by the Art Nouveau she saw in Chicago, marked the beginnings of the style for which O’Keeffe came to be known—images of flowers, animal bones, and landscapes that emphasized tone and contour.

Stieglitz began showing O’Keeffe’s work in 1916, with the first installation featuring the group of abstract charcoal drawings once sent to Anita Pollitzer. O’Keeffe and Stieglitz creatively influenced each other’s mediums of painting and photography, and they married in 1924. O’Keeffe painted, often during solitary trips to New Mexico, while almost every year Stieglitz organized exhibitions for her at his gallery An American Place in New York. They lived alternately in Manhattan and Lake George, but three years after her husband died in 1946, O’Keeffe moved permanently to Abiquiu, New Mexico.

O’Keeffe continued to experiment with her painting and for a time traveled the world. She opened several retrospectives of her work throughout the United States and in 1962 she was admitted to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The artist, whose eyesight had deteriorated, made her last unassisted painting in 1972. On March 6, 1986, Georgia O’Keeffe died, leaving a singular legacy in American art.
About Caroline Keck

Caroline Keck was Georgia O'Keeffe's personal conservator for nearly forty years, but her legacy to the world of conservation extends well beyond that time frame. Born on October 6, 1908, in New York City, Caroline Kohn earned a bachelor's degree from Vassar College in 1930 and received her master's degree from Radcliffe College in 1931. Two years later she married Sheldon Keck, and together they became perhaps the best-known art conservators in the United States.

Keck had been contracted as the Museum of Modern Art's official conservator when she met O'Keeffe in the spring of 1946. From that time on, while forging a lifelong friendship with the artist, she also consulted and worked for the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Newark Museum, Colonial Williamsburg and the New York State Historical Association, among other institutions. In 1951 the Kecks became fellows of the International Institute for Conservation. Throughout the 1980s Caroline Keck was the executive director of the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation.

The couple strongly advocated higher education in the field of art conservation. They were instrumental in establishing such programs in museums, art centers, and colleges across the United States. They helped found New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts, which offered the first master's degree program in art conservation in the country. From 1969 to 1981 the Kecks created and ran the Cooperstown Conservation training program for the State University College at Oneonta and the New York State Historical Association. In 1990, three years before her husband died, Caroline Keck supported the founding of the country’s first Ph.D. program in art conservation research at the University of Delaware.

Throughout her career Keck lectured and wrote extensively on the care and preservation of paintings. In her first book, *How to Take Care of Your Pictures: A Primer of Practical Information* (Museum of Modern Art and the Brooklyn Museum, 1954), she discussed proper painting installation techniques, care for damaged works, and the basics of painting restoration. She penned *Basic Tender Loving Care for Paintings* for the Western New York Association of Historical Agencies in 1988 and with her husband produced a film titled “A Future for the Past.” Her many lectures have informed students, faculty, and professional art handlers and conservators throughout the United States. Without a doubt, Caroline Keck and her husband, Sheldon, set the standard for current art conservation theory and practices.
About the Correspondence

The idea for this groundbreaking project came from the enthusiastic research of writer and art historian Sarah Whitaker Peters. In 2001 Peters discovered a trove of letters that had recently been donated to The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation in Abiquiu, New Mexico. The collection turned out to be a virtually unknown correspondence between the artist and her longtime friend and conservator, Caroline Keck. Realizing that the letters and their contents were unique in the history of art, Peters collaborated with the Mississippi Museum of Art (Jackson) to share this information with the public for the first time. Selections from several letters (there were ninety-seven in all) written between 1946 and 1981 are presented here in tandem with O'Keeffe’s paintings and pastels.

After the death of Georgia O'Keeffe’s husband and art dealer, Alfred Stieglitz, in July 1946, the artist needed help to carry on her career. Among the people with whom she worked most closely was conservator Caroline Keck. The two women bonded from their first meeting in the spring of 1946. They practiced a similar perfectionist work ethic, and their prime concern was for the condition of O'Keeffe’s drawings and paintings. This is what fueled their friendship and led to their nearly forty-year correspondence.

Their letters—replete with the artist’s carefree spelling and punctuation—reveal their keen intellects, a pithy candor with each other, and shared confidences about art and life. The pages attest to the highly personal voices of the women, while the reciprocal nature of the correspondence closely chronicles the evolution of their relationship—one that began formally but soon became warm and familiar.

Of historical significance, these letters describe certain canvases before and after Keck’s treatment of them, emphasizing the ways and means both women employed to protect O'Keeffe’s artistic intentions over time. The communications reveal previously unknown information about O'Keeffe’s studio practices and working methods as well. As such, the correspondence allows us to appreciate O'Keeffe’s consummate craftsmanship and better understand how crucial conservation was and still is to preserving O'Keeffe’s original pristine color and line characteristics.
About Conservation

Damage caused by a variety of less than ideal conditions, coupled with the aging of varnishes and other materials, can affect the surface of—and ultimately the viewer’s response to—a work of art. For many years Georgia O'Keeffe relied on the conservator Caroline Keck to correct, and in some cases help prevent, damage to her work.

By definition, the primary objective of conservation is to preserve cultural property for the future. Maintaining a balance between preserving the original intent of an artist and preserving a work for the future is key. The conservator’s job is an important one, requiring intelligence, foresight and restraint, and she may employ a variety of approaches depending on the needs of a particular artwork. The process begins with careful examination of an object and documentation of the concerns, and may expand to include stabilization, treatment and preventative care. Correspondence reveals that Keck took great care to reveal or restore the original color and surface of the paintings and pastels she treated for O'Keeffe. She removed old and discolored varnishes, replacing them with new formulas that would protect the work without discoloring or interfering with the visible brushstrokes. Keck would also in-paint (fill in) small areas of color where pigment had been lost or damaged over time.

How an object is handled, displayed and stored can mean the difference between preserving it for many years or for only a short time. Keck and O'Keeffe worked closely together to assure the artist’s work would remain a vibrant part of our world for many years to come.
Jawbone and Fungus, 1931
Georgia O'Keeffe, American (1887-1986)
Oil on canvas
Marion Stratton Gould fund, 51.11a

The Art:

"When I found the beautiful white
bones in the desert I picked them up
and took them home too...I have used these
things to say what is to me the wideness and
wonder of the world as I live in it."

As with Georgia O'Keeffe’s more familiar landscapes and still-lifes of flowers, shells and bones, Jawbone and Fungus is a painting rich in meaning that can be viewed on many levels; realistic, abstract and metaphoric. The canvas is divided almost in half with brown stripes seeming to suggest the horizon line of a landscape. Two objects appear to be placed on this horizon line, or is it a tabletop? A white shape, filling the foreground and bottom half of the canvas, is carefully balanced by an equally large, but dark shape filling the top and background. Georgia O'Keeffe squeezes the two shapes together into the small canvas, their obvious contrasts creating tension. While the objects are recognizable as jawbone and fungus, the artist is more interested in the abstract shapes floating in space and the metaphorical qualities of these objects. Visually Georgia O'Keeffe has presented two very different objects, a jawbone and a fungus, whose connection is ambiguous. They seem to be both in opposition and in collaboration as each object needs the other to fully reveal itself. The large white shape is an animal jawbone, bleached by the desert sun and polished by the wind-blown sand. A brown edge suggests a shadow or the inside of the bone, as it also accentuates the one jagged end of the softly rounded shape. The white color and strong lines of the bone are contrasted with the dark shadow that seems to be both behind and on top of the jawbone.

While the bone is smooth, angular, dry and hard, the fungus is textured, round, fleshy and soft, suggesting the bone is dead and fungus alive. Yet O'Keeffe, familiar with the shamanistic beliefs of the Anasazi-Pueblo peoples of Santa Fe area, saw bones as alive and sacred; and fungi, though living plants, are often metaphors for death and decay.

In 1931 O'Keeffe was dividing her time between New York and Taos, New Mexico. Perhaps the fungus represents her experience in the Adirondack Mountains of New York, the bones her love of the southwest desert. At that time her relationship with her husband was strained; could the fungus represent the black cape Stieglitz often wore and thus, the overbearing character of the man who had such an influence on her career and life? Compared to many of her paintings, O'Keeffe’s color choices here are limited to browns and grays, a somber palate perhaps suggestive of the depression she suffered at the time.

As autobiography or a study in abstractions, Jawbone and Fungus is both typical and unique in Georgia O'Keeffe’s art.
The Artist:

Georgia O'Keeffe was born in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin in 1887, in a family that valued education and actively encouraged their daughter's interest and talent in art. Art training for O'Keeffe meant drawing lessons, from the Sprang Drawing Books to formal lessons at the Art Institute of Chicago. While she excelled in the classroom, O'Keeffe rebelled against the academic style of teaching with its emphasis on imitative realism. In 1908 Georgia O'Keeffe actually stopped making art and concentrated on teaching. As an art teacher in Virginia and Texas, she encouraged her students to draw objects they liked, objects that revealed their own feelings and expressions, a teaching strategy unusual for its time. However her interest in painting was renewed when she met Alon Bement, an artist experimenting with non-representational shapes and patterns, and Arthur Wesley Dow, who “taught her the importance of filling space in a beautiful way.”

In 1912 a friend showed Georgia O'Keeffe’s drawings of Texas landscapes to photographer and gallery owner, Alfred Stieglitz. Impressed by their expression of light and powerful beauty, he exhibited them in 291, his gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue. O'Keeffe moved to New York and quickly achieved success with abstract New York City skyscrapers, Lake George rural landscapes and the large flower paintings. The Stieglitz galleries, The Intimate Gallery (1925-1929) and An American Place (1929-1946), became the center of American modernism, gathering together such artists as Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Charles Demuth and Georgia O'Keeffe who, in 1924, married Alfred Stieglitz.

It was the southwest light and landscapes that especially inspired O'Keefe. “That was my country, terrible winds and wonderful emptiness.” Between 1929 and 1945, she traveled back and forth, from New York City and Lake George to Texas and, later New Mexico. She painted the desert landscape and its flowers and animal bones. In 1949 O'Keeffe moved to Abiquiu, New Mexico, where she continued to work until failing eyesight forced her to abandon painting. She died at the age of 98.

The 1926 words of her friend and art critic, Blanche Matthias, capture Georgia O'Keeffe's spirit and significance: “This woman who lives fearlessly, reasons logically, who is modest, unassertive and spiritually beautiful and who, because she dares to paint as she feels, has become not only one of the most magical artists of our time but one of the most stimulatingly powerful.”
Ideas for Discussion and Activities:

“Color is one of the great things in this world that makes life worth living to me and as I have come to think of painting, it is my effort to create an equivalent with paint color for the world.”

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico

- Look at Georgia O'Keeffe's art from the perspective of color only. What colors has she used? Name the various colors as descriptively as possible.
- How does O'Keeffe use color to create mood, space, temperature and value?

NYS Standards: Art

In *Jawbone and Fungus*, Georgia O'Keeffe has juxtaposed a wide range of contrasts: colors, textures, lines, shapes, natural objects and emotions.

- Describe as specifically as possible all the contrasts you can see and/or infer.
- Describe how the artist unifies the image.

NYS Standards: Art

Compare *Jawbone and Fungus* with other works by Georgia O'Keeffe – other bone and fossil images, as well as flowers and landscapes.

- Identify and compare O'Keeffe’s choice of objects in these works, as well as her use of objects as abstract and/or metaphoric images.
- How does the artist compose her paintings, organize the objects in space, create points of emphasis, communicate context and move the viewer’s eye around the painting?
- Describe the impact of the paintings on your senses. What senses are most affected? How does O'Keeffe convey such sensual information?

NYS Standards: Art

Georgia O'Keeffe writes, “Details are confusing. It is only by selection, by elimination, by emphasis, that we get at the real meaning of things.”

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico

- Consider how different artists see as “the real meaning of things?
- Compare Georgia O'Keeffe’s concept of real meaning with that of other artists.

These and 70 other works of American art can be found in *Seeing America: Painting and Sculpture from the Collection of the Memorial Art Gallery*.

- Choose a traditional landscape or still life. Reduce it to 1-2 objects. Discuss your choices as you select, emphasize or eliminate specific details. What do the final objects now represent?
Once removed from context, in what ways do the objects remain representational or become abstractions or metaphors?
Title your work. Are words necessary to convey the meaning or are the objects sufficient metaphors in themselves?

NYS Standards: Art

One interpretation of Jawbone and Fungus is that the two objects represent Alfred Stieglitz’s beloved Lake George area in the Adirondack Mountains of New York and Georgia O’Keeffe’s “psychic homeland” in the Taos-Santa Fe region of New Mexico.
- Discuss the effectiveness of these two objects in representing geographic regions. What other objects might she have chosen and why?
- The O’Keeffe image closely resembles the “artist’s conk” fungus which is flat, woody, gray to brownish with a white pore surface that bruises easily. Pictures of fungi can be found at [www.bcbiodiversity.homestead.com/polypores.html](http://www.bcbiodiversity.homestead.com/polypores.html). How do these compare with the artist’s version? Why do you think she chose to depict the fungus as she did?
- Research Anasazi-Pueblo culture of New Mexico and the belief in bones as sacred objects.
- Compare Jawbone and Fungus with the many bone and horse skull images O’Keeffe completed throughout her career

NYS Standards: Art, Science, Social Studies

“From experiences of one kind or another shapes and colors come to me very clearly.”
Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Art historian Sarah Whitaker Peters has suggested that Jawbone and Fungus can be seen as abstract portraits of the artist and her husband, Alfred Stieglitz. Her essay appears in Seeing America: Painting and Sculpture from the Collection of the Memorial Art Gallery.
- What personality traits or attributes are suggested by a mule’s jawbone and a fungus?
- How has the artist portrayed the two objects to describe the relationship between these two people?
- Think about an object or abstract form that is a metaphor for your personality. Create a visual image that portrays your personality. What can you portray visually that you cannot express in words?
- Write a symbolic word portrait of you and another person.
- Imagine these objects in a sequential story board of at least four scenes. Write the dialogue—thoughts and conversations—as the story evolves.

NYS Standards: Art, ELA

Consider Georgia O’Keeffe’s statement “I found I could say things with colors that I couldn’t say in any other way—things that I had no words for.”
- Compare the similarities and the differences in these two forms of expression, the use of words and the use of images.
- How do you prefer to express yourself—visually or in words? Why?

NYS Standards: Art, ELA

Support for the Gallery’s 2006-07 school programs is provided by Dominion, Bank of America, and the Mary W. Clark Trust. Additional support is provided by the Fred and Floy Willmott Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Judson Jr., the estate of Estelle B. Goldman and an anonymous donor for the McPherson Director of Education.
Georgia O’Keeffe: In Her Own Words

“I found I could say things with colors that I couldn’t say in any other way—things that I had no words for.”

“I paint because color is a significant language to me.”

“I decided that if I could paint that flower in a huge scale, you could not ignore its beauty.”

“Sometimes I start in a very realistic fashion, and as I go on from one painting to another of the same kind, it becomes simplified until it can be nothing but abstraction.”

“One can’t paint New York as it is, but rather as it is felt.”

“A hill or a tree cannot make a good painting just because it is a hill or tree. It is lines and colors put together so that they may say something.”

“All the earth colors of the painter’s palette are out there in the many miles of badlands.”

“A red hill doesn’t touch everyone’s heart as it touches mine and I suppose there is no reason why it should.”

“Stones, bones and clouds—experience gives me shapes—but sometimes the shapes I paint end up having no resemblance to the actual experience.”

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Slender Means - The Making of Small World Poems
Inspired by the art of Georgia O’Keeffe

Memorial Art Gallery
Teacher In-Service
Wednesday, October 11, 2006, 4:30-7 p.m.
Workshop Leader: M.J. Iuppa

Materials:
   A Selection of Georgia O’Keeffe’s art postcards
   A word spill page
   Paper and pencils

Directions for creating a Small World Poem:

Select an O’Keeffe art postcard
Look carefully at the painting (postcard).
On your brainstorming page, you will see six categories:

   Images  Emotions  Sound/Smell  Action Verbs  Month/Season  Colors

Look carefully at your painting and write down a word under each category.

Example:

        apple           hunger          wet leaves      rustling          October         russet

You will have six or more words. Once you have those words, write words in response to those words. This is free association. Write it quickly, let the words spill.

Now you will have at least 12 or more words. You’ve doubled your vocabulary.

Using the words from your word spill, I want you to write a Small World Poem, which is no longer than six lines. Of course, you may use any other word in your vocabulary. So your poem makes sense.

Think of the elegance of the Japanese forms such as haiku or senryu (three line poems) which are based on “image equals thought.” The opportunity to focus solely on the image/object leads us to everything else. How true the adage “less is more.”

M.J. Iuppa, poet, essayist, short storyist, is the Writer-in-Residence and Director of the Arts Minor Program at St. John Fisher College.
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<th>Images</th>
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<th>Sound/Smell</th>
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Georgia O'Keeffe: A Sense of Place
Educational Resources
Teacher In-service
October 11, 2006

Available in The Gallery Store
Available in Memorial Art Gallery Teacher Resource Center

For Children


For Adults


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