

# Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

## O'Keeffe Conservation Project Receives \$349,988 from National Endowment for the Humanities

*The grant funds the project "Metallic Soap Protrusions on Georgia O'Keeffe's Paintings: A Methodology to Diagnose Morphological and Chemical Changes".*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—December 28, 2017 (Santa Fe, NM)**— The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum is proud to partner with scientists from Northwestern University/Art Institute of Chicago Center for Scientific Studies in the Arts (NU-ACCESS) on a groundbreaking conservation and engineering project supported by an award of \$349,988 from the National Endowment for the Humanities. NU-ACCESS received the grant to advance scientific imaging and technologies to protect paintings vulnerable to deterioration caused by their own materials' chemical changes. Specifically, this collaborative endeavor with the Museum will develop 3-D imaging technology that will assess the growth of destructive soaps in Georgia O'Keeffe's oil paintings.

Soaps result from the combination of an alkaline substance with a fat. In the case of the study's subjects, soaps form when the fats in oil paint reacts with alkaline materials, such as pigments and drying agents. Soaps can cause discoloration and deformities. Damage by soaps affect approximately 70% of paintings in all museum collections. The need to develop an accurate, yet non-invasive, monitoring tool is immense. 3-D imaging will allow researchers to examine the works at a microscopic level, and record data about the soaps' development—without physically altering the paintings.

The results will guide preservation decisions for O'Keeffe's work. They will also produce a set of web-based image processing tools, and promote exchanges of related research among conservators around the world. Dale Kronkright, Head of Conservation at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, says, "We first began using 3-D imaging to monitor the preservation of Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings and pastels in 2011. This award by the National Endowment for the Humanities propels the development of those first trials into a mature set of new scientific tools for the conservation community."

The project will run for approximately two years. It will begin in spring of 2018.

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**ABOUT THE GEORGIA O'KEEFFE MUSEUM:**

To inspire all current and future generations, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum preserves, presents and advances the artistic legacy of Georgia O'Keeffe and modernism through innovative public engagement, education, and research. Opened in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1997, the Museum counts O'Keeffe's two New Mexico homes as part of its extended collection. The Museum's collections, exhibitions, research center, publications and educational programs contribute to scholarly discourse and serve a diverse audience. The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum presents an ongoing series of thematic galleries exploring the career of the artist through her artwork, art materials, archives, and the landscapes and experiences that defined her life, on view throughout 2017. For more information, please visit [okeeffemuseum.org](http://okeeffemuseum.org).

**ABOUT THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES (*from***

[www.neh.gov/about](http://www.neh.gov/about)): The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is an independent federal agency created in 1965. It is one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the United States.

**ABOUT NU-ACCESS (*from* [www.nuaccess.northwestern.edu](http://www.nuaccess.northwestern.edu)):**

The Northwestern University/Art Institute of Chicago Center for Scientific Studies in the Arts (NU-ACCESS) is a collaborative endeavor in conservation science that pursues objects-based and objects-inspired scientific research to advance the role of science within art history, curatorial scholarship, archaeology, and conservation. The goals of the collaborative program are to enrich the breadth, scope, and reach of scientific studies in the arts and in the wider field of conservation in the United States and abroad, by leveraging resources at the Art Institute and materials-related departments at Northwestern University. This research and education initiative also provides enhanced training opportunities for participants through involvement in university-museum multidisciplinary programs.