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O' KEEFFE

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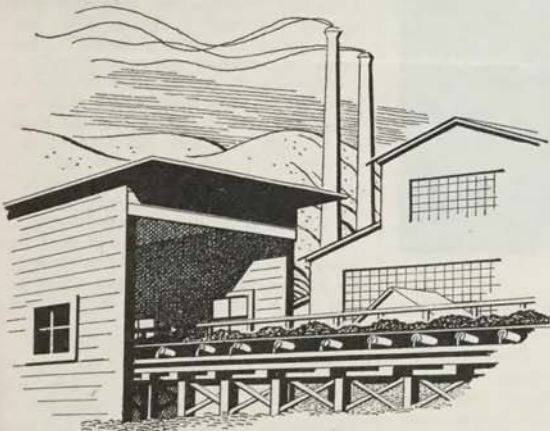
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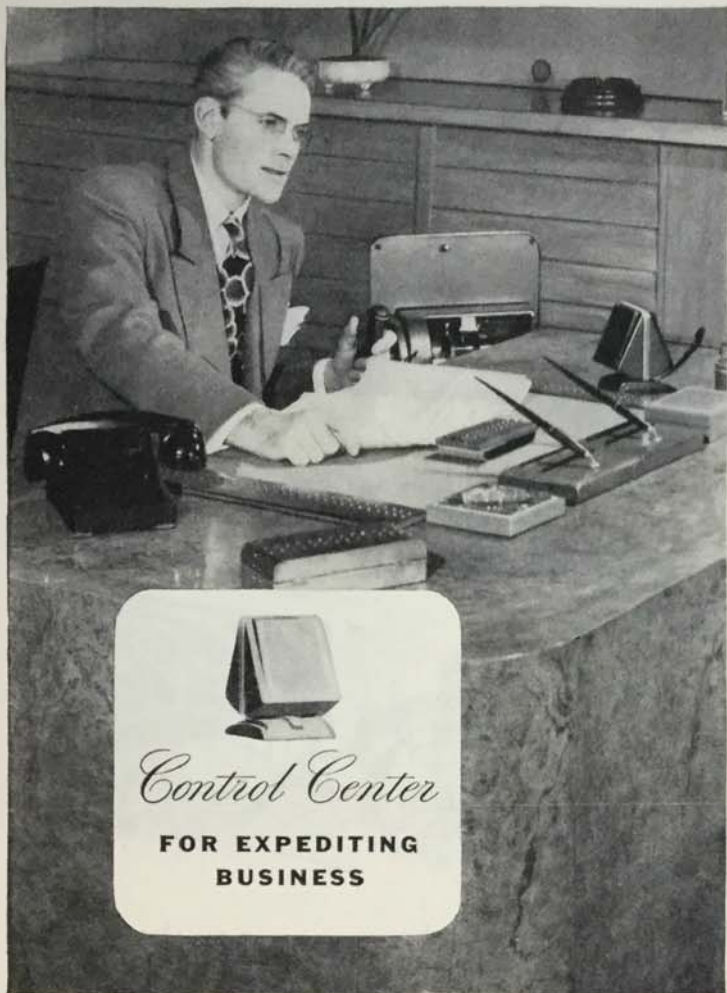
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**ART**

**Austere Stripper**

"Singing," says Artist Georgia O'Keeffe, "has always seemed to me the most perfect means of expression. Since I cannot sing, I paint." Last week 57 examples of her kind of song went on view in Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art. Each one had the contrived spontaneity of music, and in each the melody of line and color meant more than the bones, blossoms, skyscrapers, barns, crosses and canyon walls she used for lyrics.

Whatever else can be said about her, no one paints a pelvis or a skull more cleanly or searchingly than O'Keeffe. Her brush, like a surgical knife, pares the bony involutions to paper thinness, sculpturing them in icy white against the ice-blue sky of New Mexico—where she spends half of each year.

To flower painting she brings a technique familiar in photography but seldom attempted on canvas: the dramatic closeup. Like a bee, she explores the innermost recesses of hollyhocks, irises and morning-glories, and manages to extract an almost cloying degree of honey-sweet, cream-smooth satisfaction from them.

**Canyons, in City and Country.** But O'Keeffe's chief claim to fame lies in the brilliant hardness of her most ambitious work. Her cityscapes look as unyielding as asphalt, and sharp as broken glass; her barns are as antiseptic as hospitals; her crosses as forbidding as the real thing.

O'Keeffe's art, says Museum director of painting and sculpture James Johnson Sweeney, in a forthcoming Museum book on O'Keeffe, is "stark but always constrained. . . . And the way she came to this was by the severest self-stripping." O'Keeffe, a thin, austere-looking woman, has been stripping herself for a long time. Born 58 years ago in the small town of Sun Prairie, Wis., she decided to paint as she pleased, because "it seemed to be the only thing that I could do that did not concern anyone but myself. . . ."

After studying in Manhattan, doing commercial art in Chicago, and teaching in Texas, she locked herself into a room and "held a private exhibition of everything I had painted. I noticed which paintings had been influenced by this painter, which by that one. Then I determined which . . . represented me alone. From that moment forward I knew exactly what kind of work I wanted to do."

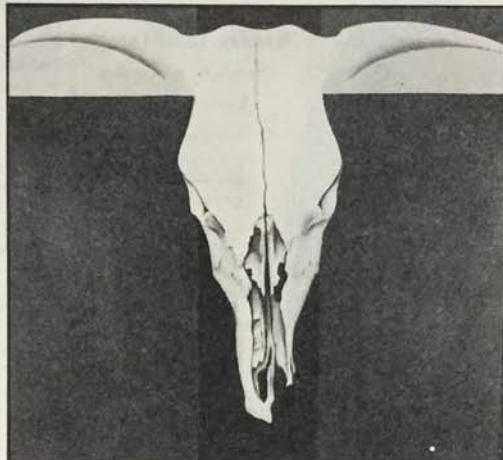
In 1916 a friend showed O'Keeffe's drawings (without her permission) to Alfred Stieglitz, pioneer photographer and missionary of modern art. Said he: "Finally a woman on paper." When he put her work on exhibition, O'Keeffe stormed into Stieglitz' gallery to protest, afraid that gallerygoers would find the drawings incomprehensible. Stieglitz asked gently whether she herself knew what her drawings meant. Huffed O'Keeffe: "Do you think I'm an idiot?" Eight years later they were married.

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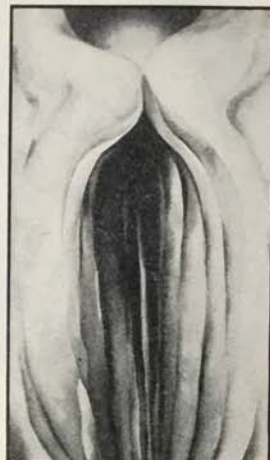
GEORGIA O'KEEFFE'S AMERICA



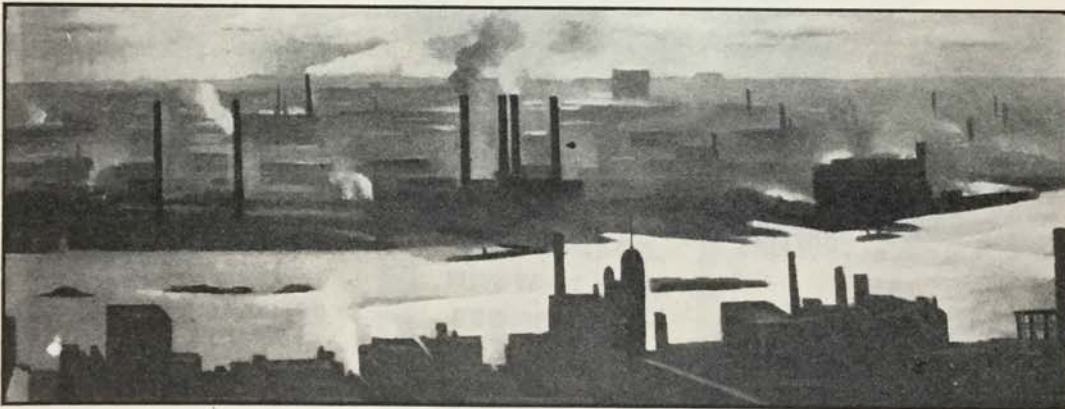
SHELTON WITH SUNSPOTS



COW'S SKULL WITH RED



GRAY LINE



EAST RIVER FROM THE SHELTON



BLACK CROSS



JIMSON WEED



The Museum of Modern Art  
WHITE PLACE IN SHADOW

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## MILESTONES

**Married.** Morton Cecil ("Mort") Cooper, 33, burly Boston Braves ace pitcher (who on his wedding night was knocked out of the box by unfeeling St. Louis Cardinals); and Viola ("Dee") Smallwood, 25; he for the third time, she for the first; in Boston.

**Married.** Alice Muriel Astor Obolensky von Hoffmannsthal Harding, 34, (daughter of Colonel John Jacob Astor, sister of Vincent); and David Pleydell-Bouverie, 34, U.S.-naturalized grandson of the late British munitions tycoon Albert Vickers; she for the fourth time, he for the first; in Reading, Vt.

**Marriage Revealed.** Eugene Goossens, 53, British-born composer-conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; and Marjorie Fetter Folkrod, 34; he for the third time, she for the second; in Paris, Ky. on April 18.

**Died.** David Stewart Iglehart, 72, recently retired head of W. R. Grace & Co. (TIME, May 20), dean of the Long Island polo-playing set, father of crack Poloists Stewart (10-goal handicap) and Philip; in Old Westbury, L.I.

**Died.** Dr. Albert Soiland, 73, radiologist and cancer fighter; of a heart attack; in Stavanger, Norway. Starting 63 years ago as a Norwegian immigrant, he made a rags-to-riches rise in medicine, founded two schools (American College of Radiology, Los Angeles Tumor Institute), dedicated his near-million-dollar life earnings to cancer research.

**Died.** Newton Booth Tarkington, 76, best-selling literary Gentleman from Indiana, two-time Pulitzer Prizewinner (*The Magnificent Ambersons*, 1919; *Alice Adams*, 1922), whose heirs included Willie Baxter, Penrod and Sam, Monsieur Beaucaire; after long illness; in Indianapolis. In the generation of Hoosier writing which produced James Whitcomb Riley and George Ade, he carved his niche with tender, trenchant satire on U.S. life and manners. A tremendous worker, he wrote 60 novels and plays, drove himself so hard that he once lost his eyesight. In the belief that pleasure should pay, he financed upkeep of his Kennebunkport, Me. home with chucklers about summer people (*Mary's Neck*), helped pay for his art collection with *Rumbin Galleries*. Tarkington on writing: "A very painful job—much worse than having measles."

**Died.** John Kinley Tener, 82, Irish-born onetime Governor of Pennsylvania (1911-15), oldtime baseballer and National League president; in Pittsburgh.

**Died.** Eberhard Faber, 87, board chairman of the Eberhard Faber Pencil Co., perennial duffer who donated hundreds of golf trophies; in Manhattan.

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## ART



Philadelphia Museum of Art

Camille Corot's famous "Bacchante and Panther"

## Corot's Hundred Faces

In turbulent nineteenth-century France, Camille Corot was an extraordinarily peaceful figure who painted serene landscapes and pensive girls dressed in Italian costumes. A hard-working man, unmarried but devoted to his family and friends, he tried hard to please everybody and that was probably his greatest weakness.

When the judges of the annual Salon in Paris did not like his simple landscapes, he sent them classical allegories painted in the academic style. When his straightforward figure studies were not approved he kept them hidden in his studio—although he also kept on painting them. When the public fell for his misty gray landscapes he worked hard in his declining years to turn them out by the dozens. He even lent a helping hand to hard-up imitators by signing his name to their pictures—a fact partially responsible for the old saw: "Corot painted 3,000 pictures, of which 10,000 are to be found in America."

Corot was born 150 years ago and last week, in honor of this event, the Philadelphia Museum of Art inaugurated a comprehensive exhibition of his work. In addition to 78 paintings, 80 etchings, and 7 drawings, the Museum is showing 12 of the 100 photographs which were made of the robust, carelessly dressed artist between 1852 and 1875.

Corot is an artist whose reputation—as well as his painting—can be traced through "periods." After his once popular filmy landscapes were discredited, people got the idea that only his early landscapes and late figure pieces were important. The Philadelphia Museum aims to demonstrate what scholars now believe: that Corot's best paintings include both landscapes and figures, were painted throughout his life, but were in-

variably those done directly from nature. The fluffy gray landscapes are still in ill repute and only a few are in the exhibit. One of the few classical subjects approved today is "Bacchante and Panther." This painting of a reclining nude and a nude child (Corot's grandnephew) astride a panther is called in the Philadelphia Museum's catalogue, "one of Corot's most distinguished inventions."

**The Red Ribbon:** Corot's reputation was variable even in his lifetime. His mother was a well-known modiste and his father, formerly a coiffeur, assisted her. Fortunately, when Corot was 26, they finally agreed to finance him as an artist. Corot didn't sell a picture for sixteen years and was nearly 60 before he made a regular income from his painting.

Even after official honors began to come his way, the Academy continued

to blast Corot. When he was made a member of the Legion of Honor and later an officer, the superintendent of the Beaux-Arts called him "an unfortunate who runs a sponge dipped in mud over his canvases." Corot's father, the worst of the die-hards, thought the Legion of Honor had been awarded to himself and, when finally convinced of his mistake, wrote his son: "Your neglected appearance is not worthy of a man with the red ribbon in his buttonhole."

## O'Keeffe's Woman Feeling

Rare in the annals of art is an outstanding woman painter—so rare, in fact, that for a quarter of a century Georgia O'Keeffe has held undisputed sway as America's No. 1 woman artist. Many honors have come her way. William and Mary College at Williamsburg, Va., where she was raised, made her a Doctor of Fine Arts in 1939. Born at Sun Prairie, Wis., she was made a Doctor of Letters by the University of Wisconsin in 1942. The Art Institute of Chicago, where she studied for a year, put on her first retrospective exhibition in 1943. Last week she was honored by her present home town. In New York, the Museum of Modern Art opened a retrospective O'Keeffe show organized by its painting chief, James Johnson Sweeney.

At 58, Miss O'Keeffe belongs to the older generation of modern artists. Like the photographer Edward Weston she takes simple objects and blows them up into even handsomer simplifications. She is best known for her enlargements of flowers—giant irises, petunias, and morning-glories—and for her desert skulls and bones. The paintings are as stark as the artist herself, with her long black skirts and her black hair drawn straight back from her pioneer-woman features. They are as clear and luminous as the air of New Mexico, where a great many of them were painted. Their edges are clean-cut but their lines are sinuous. Their texture is



Museum of Modern Art Photos

Georgia O'Keeffe and . . . her "Pelvis With the Distance"

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smooth and soft. Though she uses velvet black and an occasional flash of red, the colors are mostly shades of white and gray and pastels, especially blue.

**The New O'Keeffe:** Georgia O'Keeffe, a farmer's daughter, was teaching art at Columbia College, South Carolina, in 1915 when she gave herself, one day, a private art show. "I could go all around the room and see I'd painted the best I could like everyone I'd worked with," she recalls. "I decided I was a very stupid fool not at least to paint as I wanted to... I'd never thought of doing it because I'd never seen anything like it."

So "Patsy" O'Keeffe worked as she wanted to and the next year sent some of her new-type drawings to her New York friend, the suffragette Anita Pollitzer. Earlier she had written: "Anita—do you know—I believe I would rather have Stieglitz like something—anything I had done—than anyone else I know of." Alfred Stieglitz, the photographer, was impresario of "291," a center of ferment in all the arts and the gallery which first showed Picasso, Matisse, and the other French moderns in this country. Miss Pollitzer took the drawings to Stieglitz, and he made his now famous remark: "At last, a woman on paper."

Stieglitz exhibited the drawings and then, in his words, "O'Keeffe came along and we found we were co-workers. We believed in the same things. And finally we were together." They were married in 1924. Every year since, Georgia O'Keeffe has exhibited at her husband's gallery, now called An American Place, where the prices are unusually high though the "dealer" takes no commission. Stieglitz, who has a small income, claims he has never made a cent from art. Of his wife's work he has said: "O'Keeffe gives something of a woman feeling. And a woman isn't a man."

While her early paintings were more lyrical and masterful, O'Keeffe's thin-framed, unsigned canvases have changed little through the years. Since 1929 she has spent May to November in New Mexico, which has provided her subject matter: the red hills which rise outside the back door of her eight-room adobe house near Abiquiu; the junson weed which is allowed to grow in her patio but is neatly surrounded with bits of shiny red rock; the bleached bones which she picks up in the desert. Sometimes she combines the desert and the bones as in "Deer's Horns Near Cameron" and "Pelvis With the Distance." She likes to quote the Indian who, after seeing her collection of bones, remarked: "Everything is so alive in your house."

Winters Miss O'Keeffe returns to her New York apartment and to Stieglitz, now an ailing seer of 82 who sticks by An American Place except for two or three months at Lake George. To visitors, he still says of his wife's paintings: "Just incredible." With equally frank admiration she asks: "Did you ever see anything like that before?"

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19 May 1946

# O'KEEFFE: 30 YEARS

## Museum of Modern Art Presents a Full View of Her Work—Other Shows

By EDWARD ALDEN JEWELL

**T**HE evolution of Georgia O'Keeffe's art is clearly and economically demonstrated at the Museum of Modern Art, where her one-man show, arranged under the direction of James Johnson Sweeney, opened last week. This outstanding event in the artist's career will remain current through Aug. 25.

I have just spoken of the O'Keeffe retrospective as "economical," and in a preliminary notice (Wednesday morning) it was suggested that appreciative spectators might very willingly look at more paintings than have been assembled. As another critic remarked to me in passing, the end seems reached with some abruptness. However, one is likely to decide, walking back and forth through the rooms, again and again, that all of the points essential to a just summing up are made. And that is the important thing in a survey such as this.

The task of selection was most intelligently performed. A distinguished artist here emerges at full stature, and one is able to estimate, as well as a contemporary can, the quality of her achievement.

### Consistent Development

It seems to me, as it seemed so far back as 1928, that Georgia O'Keeffe is in the ultimate sense a mystic. Her work, so much of it at any rate, is charged with a spirit of universality, even when expression appears tethered to what is immediate and finite. She paints a flower, a leaf, a shell, a tree, the desiccated skull of an animal, portraying these objects as microcosms; and it will be always the macrocosm—the enveloping sum of elements peculiar to life and death—that presses in, giv-

ing the concept its final radiance. All this need not, should not, be made to sound too esoteric. It is really simple enough, albeit not too frequently encountered in art: Blake's grain of sand conceived as a world, an hour as eternity. And while development of this motivating idea has been consistent, the artist seems at the start to have sensed what may be termed the quintessential.

Indeed, O'Keeffe's basic thesis, later amplified, is first enunciated, in 1915, as a complete or absolute abstraction: the extraordinary water-color, "Blue Lines." The continuity of her endeavor becomes manifest if you take just one of those lines and follow its course through the adventures of the years.

You find it recurring, though of course adapted or cunningly disguised, in canvas after canvas: in, for instance, the "Corn, Dark," of 1922; the "Gray Line With Black, Blue and Yellow" (another full abstraction) of the following year; in the "Dark Abstraction" of 1924, where it adumbrates many a crisp edge of house or rock crevice to come; in the "Open Clam Shell" and "Closed Clam Shell" of 1926. It reappears in the "Line and Curve" and "Black Abstraction" of the next year, tracing also an intricate convolution in the "White Rose" abstraction.

The line runs vividly down the central passage of the 1928 "Brown and Tan Leaves"; resumes almost its initial guise in the "Jack in the Pulpit" of 1930; bifurcates the "Cow's Skull With Red" and the superlatively fine "Cow's Skull With Calico Roses," of about the same period. This pliant sovereign line cuts like forked lightning across the face of the mountain

### Corot at the Philadelphia Museum



"La Blonde Gasconne," lent by th

cleit in "Black Place No. I," painted as recently as 1944.

This is one aspect of the mystical rhythm that animates O'Keeffe's art. And there are many more.

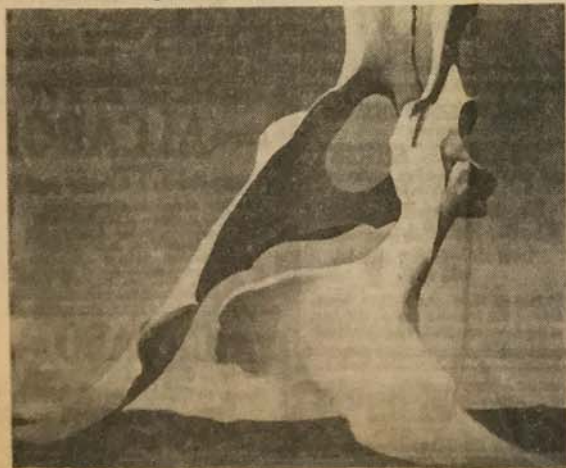
### Craft and Style

Georgia O'Keeffe tells us that long ago she determined to offer as finished work only what she felt represented "her alone." The fruit of this decision appears abundantly, look where you will in the retrospective at the museum. The determining imprint of a particular, an always individual style is everywhere about the walls. The painting is autobiographic as thoroughly as it is mystical. Each picture might be called a portrait of the artist herself.

Of course in order to achieve style such as this, one must possess craftsmanship of a very high order—even though we know that, in art, craft can never stand as an end in itself. Another artist, Tom Loftin Johnson, asks me in a letter at hand: "Where does style begin and technique end?" The answer is that the two elements are inextricably interwoven, yet separate, too. Without the rightness of technique there can be no supreme rightness of style, though "rightness" should be defined only with reference to the individual artist. When style is fully expressive, then you may be sure that there is craftsmanship equal to all the demands implied.

No better illustration need be sought than the signal beauty of O'Keeffe's painting, whether revealed monumentally or in pictures minute in scale, such as the "Shell and Old Shingle" and "Seaweed." O'Keeffe does not always attain the summit of her quest. When she does, let the walkin ring!

### Georgia O'Keeffe in Retrospect



"Pelvis With the Distance," lent by Mr. and Mrs. James W. Feeler for the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.

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May 18, 1946

NEW



# THIS WEEK I

## Georgia O'Keeffe's Exhibit

So often a comprehensive, retrospective solo show of even a familiar artist's work underlines unfamiliar facets of his talent, or throws new light on his whole expression, that I had hoped somehow this would be true of Georgia O'Keeffe's new exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. Else why, at this late date, should the Modern present it?

I was wrong. How could it have been otherwise when every year now for 20 years New York has seen at least one show of recent work by this most celebrated of woman painters in America? For old-timers her work was a familiar story even before the series of annuals began. O'Keeffe made her debut in 1916 at Alfred Stieglitz's famous little "291" Gallery, the cradle of modern art in this country. By 1923 a show of 100 of her oils was held at the old Anderson Galleries.

### A Curious Paradox.

Despite its familiarity, O'Keeffe's work has offered a curious paradox over the years. At "291" and at Stieglitz's subsequent establishments, "The Intimate Gallery" and the current "An American

Place," she had always been one of a small group whose art was so experimental and cerebral as to appeal only to the avant-garde. John Marin, today hailed by museum men, collectors, students, critics, as the most important waters colorist in the country, is still far from really widespread popular understanding. Maurer, Dove, Carles, others of what Stieglitz called his "laboratory" group haven't won general acceptance even in the art world.

But O'Keeffe has been the darling of the public for years. Reproductions of her paintings long have been best-sellers in department stores and framing shops. It is ironical to read her early letters, for instance the one she sent to a friend in 1915 apropos some recent drawings. "I hate to show them. . . I am afraid people won't understand—and I hope they won't—and am afraid they will."

Perhaps if she had continued her work in the manner of 1915 they wouldn't have. Three of the efforts of that year have been included in the museum show. They're the sparsest kind of abstraction—so slight as to be little more than a line or two and a spot of color—although they are surprisingly expressive.

But later she used nature as her springboard—never springing so far that the literal-minded couldn't follow her. Flowers, landscapes, fruit, shells—however she simplified, magnified and stylized her forms they retained always their natural character.

She did something more. She used dramatic and attractive colors. Her craftsmanship was incredibly neat, with never a line losing its crispness nor a surface remaining anything but smooth. The results were extremely decorative. In addition her pictures had an air of mystery to them, and many observers felt they had just the subtlest suggestion of the erotic. It was a combination cut to measure for popular approval.

### Still Retains Hold.

Yet O'Keeffe, for all her appeal to the many, never has lost her hold on the few. More sophisticated art lovers may regret the loss of spontaneity in her work in recent years, the stretching of some of her compositions—her flowers particularly—to the point of thinness, the fact that many of them seem productions from formula (as, for instance, the 1932 "Jimson Weed" in the show, no more substantial than a decorative screen).

If the present exhibition points

up her shortcomings, it highlights at the same time the virtues which have endeared much of her work to even the most demanding connoisseurs. These are exemplified in the exquisite relationships between the deep reticent colors of "Dark Mesa and Pink Sky"; the movement and the rhythm of design in "Black Place No. 1"; the clean, uncompromising austerity of "White Canadian Barn"; the poetry and mystery of the dark forms in "City Nights."

The show itself, incidentally, displays in its hanging the same character as some of the paintings. It's over-magnified, with too much area given to too little.



"Xochi," by Hartwig, in the woman artists' show at the Academy.

## Under the

There's no sign yet of a break in the unseasonably heavy schedules of the town's art and antiques auction rooms. Catalogs, advance announcements and broadsides continue to arrive heralding exhibitions and sales set to take place within the next few days.

The Parke-Bernet Galleries today opened a show of French and Italian antique furniture, decora-

to include block Satu Se Fren pain Rena bron Dute of of

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## O'Keeffe at the Museum

### An Exhibition That Confirms the Opinion Long Held by the Public.

The name Georgia O'Keeffe goes up in the lights. Stardom! It is placarded on high, along with Chagall's at the Modern Museum and may be read from as far away as Fifth avenue. Stardom at last! It has been a long time coming. Or has it? In the case of a lady perhaps one should not be too insistent on dates, yet, alas, some of them must be mentioned.

But the road to fame could have been rougher. It was softened for Miss O'Keeffe by a romantic and lucky marriage—Alfred Stieglitz the photographer. There came to notice almost at once something about some photographs showing every conceivable aspect of O'Keeffe that was a new effort in photography and something new in the way of introducing a budding artist. It made a stir. Mona Lisa got but one portrait of herself worth talking about. O'Keeffe got a hundred. It put her at once on the map. Everybody knew the name. She became what is known as a newspaper personality. The New Yorker consecrated one of its "Profiles" to her.

That was a long time ago. Practically anybody can participate in a sensation and be known for a day, but not everybody can keep it up. Miss O'Keeffe can and has. Consulting the records supplied by the museum to the press, it appears she has had twenty-nine shows, not missing a year since 1923, and sometimes showing twice in a year. As a mere success story this, of course, far outdistances anything experienced by Michelangelo or William Blake.

The suavity, serenity and extreme finish of Miss O'Keeffe's work may be contributed to the comparative ease of her career. It is not in the least likely that she could have been suppressed by hardship, but probably if there had been frustrations, disappointments, a bit of starvation and no recognition whatever, some of the bitterness that is now so noticeably absent might

have crept into her production. But its essential qualities of decoration, clarity of ideas and mysticism would have flourished just the same.

In early youth the artist studied with Prof. Dow of Boston, getting from him the bias toward decoration that has stuck to her ever since. She was born in Wisconsin, but early in her impressionable years lived for a time in Texas, where she decided that the Southwest was practically heaven. Recently she has been painting in New Mexico which is just as heavenly as Texas. She has never been afraid of the lonely mountain ranges; and clear skies and immense distances and vastness in general have fed her fancy and provided her with the material for her pictures.

There you have the genesis of this artist; design, clear color, and immense, spooky perspectives that lend themselves to mysticism but not to fear. There is nothing to frighten the ladies who are Miss O'Keeffe's main adherents in the work. In New York, where Miss O'Keeffe spends the winter, she paints the skyscrapers as though their largeness was their main attraction—as it probably is. She reduces the river vistas and the canyons between the big buildings to the utmost simplicity and paints them with the same calmness she bestows upon a petunia. Her exhibition has been beautifully installed by James Johnson Sweeney. It is the best she has ever had and places her securely in the top position among women artists. However, that is not news. The public has thought so for some time. H. McB.

*Seen May 16, 1946*

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31 March 1945

# York World-Telegram

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SECOND SECTION

9

## Lady Dynamo



Miss Georgia O'Keeffe (right), distinguished American artist, says, "I don't especially care for flowers." But she paints them. Below, she's shown with her "Jack in the Pulpit" and at the left is another of her paintings. "One paints what is around," says she.

A. P. Photos and (right) World-Telegram Photos.



### Miss O'Keeffe, Noted Artist, Is a Feminist

Second of a Series.  
By CAROL TAYLOR,  
World-Telegram Staff Writer.

It was a gray, gloomy day and a first glance at the studio-living room of Georgia O'Keeffe's apartment made it seem the gloomier.

The walls were white, the few pieces of simple furniture slip-covered in black. There was no rug. The effect was not dramatic, just plain. The only color in the room was the O'Keeffe abstraction that hung over the white mantel, blue (was it a cloud or an oyster?) against delicate gray.

Miss O'Keeffe, the distinguished American artist, wore black and her skirt was loose and longer than the current fashion. There was no make-up on her face and her black, gray-tinged hair was drawn straight back from her forehead. She seated herself behind a long, functional table made of three straight pieces of wood and poured Mexican tea from a severe white pot.

And then she started talking. Her long, strong hands moved constantly as she spoke, accenting her conversation.

#### Hangs Onto Name.

Soon you could see that the face was not just severe. There was humor in it—dry, earthy humor. There was playfulness in it, too, and understanding.

In no time at all the room seemed cozy and there was color in it, the glowing color of the woman.

She was vibrant as a field of red poppies! And as she spoke of her home in New Mexico, confessed her weakness for garlic and Mexican chili peppers (and for breakfast) she seemed homey as a fire on the hearth.

A few days before Alfred Stieglitz, the famous photographer, was asked for his "wife's" telephone number. "Don't call her my wife!" corrected Stieglitz. "She's a person in her own right."

But the interviewer had forgotten. So—



"Don't call me Mrs. Stieglitz," corrected Miss O'Keeffe. "I've had a hard time hanging onto my name, but I hang onto it with my teeth. I like getting what I've got on my own."

Yes, the hostess was conceding. "My home is simple. But I aim to make it simpler!" And she spurns color in dress, she explained, "because a color you have to live up to. There's something about black. You feel hidden away in it."

She revealed herself as something of a feminist, but of the kind that discusses the subject over tea cups, not from a soap box!

"I believe in women making their own living," she said. "It will be nice when women have equal opportunities and status with men so that it is taken as a matter of course."

And on the other hand—"I think there are some men who would like to cook and keep house," she added. "Why shouldn't they?"

She poured a third cup of tea, slipped it slowly, and observed: "Art is at a low ebb. I think it is the direction of our civilization. It's that what is considered important has nothing to do with art."

Miss O'Keeffe was speaking intently, and there were sparks in her low voice.

"What our civilization is inter-

ested in," she said, "is how much money they can make out of it and how fast they can make it go."

She believes, she went on, that artists, writers, composers should never try to make a living out of their art, because they thereby often prostitute it.

"I never had any idea of making a living out of my painting," she insisted. "Of course, I always intended being a painter. But I meant to stick to something else for my living."

"I had this desire and interest in painting to want to do my own things."

#### Her Start.

"I knew my own things looked different from anything I saw around. It never occurred to me that anyone would be interested. I think I'm lucky that I could do what I wanted to do and people were interested."

"But," she added, "I might have been a much better painter and no one would have been interested. Public interest has nothing to do with how good you are."

Her work came to the public view in 1916 (she was then art supervisor in the Amarillo, Texas, public schools) when she sent a group of sketches to a New York friend, cautioning her to show them to no one. The friend

showed them to Stieglitz, who gave an O'Keeffe exhibition at his famous 291 Fifth Ave. gallery. The artist rushed irately to town to ask him by what right he had exhibited her work without permission. But she left 291, having agreed to devote all her time to painting in the future.

"Up to the time I did those sketches," she said, "I had painted what my teachers told me to paint, what someone else had painted. Then one day it happened. This thing that is your own is so close to you, often you never realize it is there. It's like your skin, you're not conscious of it until a mosquito bites you."

"It's just the ordinary things that is around you. If you'll take the trouble to look at it, put it in your own form . . . I feel that if it could happen to almost anyone, it would be different."

When it happened to Miss O'Keeffe she puts her paints away, started all over again the simplest way, in charcoal. "It was like learning to walk," she said.

O'Keeffe exhibitions are few. "The way people rush and paint two or three pictures and think they should have an exhibition is poppycock," she remarked casually. "But I guess I'm just not ambitious."

From spring to fall she paints at her adobe house 20 miles from the nearest settlement, Abiquiu, N. M., where "there is one white man. He runs the store and the postoffice."

"It's the most wonderful place you can imagine," she said of that spot in New Mexico that is her own. "It's so beautiful there. It's ridiculous. In front of my house there are low scrub bushes and cottonwood trees and, further out, a line of hills. And then I have this mountain. A flat top mountain that slopes off on each side. A blue mountain. And to the left you can see snow covered mountains, far, far away."

"At the back door," she continued, "are the red hills and the cliffs and the sands—the bad lands. I go out of my back door and walk for 15 minutes and I am some place that I've never been before, where it seems that no one has ever been before me."

#### Lives Rugged Life.

Watching Miss O'Keeffe's face as she described her home, you

recall that critics have called her a poet.

She laughed. "It's my sickness. It's like an ailment. It's so far away and nobody ever comes. . ."

Miss O'Keeffe is impatient with people who think she must be delicate, like her paintings. Life at her adobe house is rugged. Every drop of water must be pumped from the ground. The light plant is eccentric. But she manages.

"I come from people that did things with their hands," she said. She winters with Mr. Stieglitz in the 59 E. 54th St. apartment and paints "day after day, all day, as soon as I can get started in the morning until dark."

She doesn't think about recreation. "When you work as I work, what you do is your pleasure." But, she admitted she likes to walk. She has a few friends that she likes to be with.

She never eats in restaurants and seldom goes out socially. "I can't take it," she said, "I sometimes wonder how people can take it." Nor does she like shopping. "I hate shopping," she exclaimed. "I go shopping in the spring and in the fall."

She is also impatient with those who picture her as a romantic lover of flowers because she paints them.

"I don't especially care for flowers," she said. "When I first started painting them, I didn't like the place I was in."

"And then I saw a freshly painted white flagpole with a white zinnia bed around it. The flowers were so dirty against the fresh white. I was fascinated. I painted them."

"One paints what is around," she added. "That was right under my nose."

She reads every night before she goes to sleep, "something so that in a little while I get something to think about." At present her bedside book is by Nehru.

Once a friend chided her for not having read Plato. "It just hasn't happened to my hand," she told him. But she went home and found a volume of Plato in her library and "took it to bed with great interest."

"The flowers have to be handy and Plato has to be handy," finished Georgia O'Keeffe. "I don't go far afield for it if it isn't there."

Monday: Betsy Blackwell, magazine editor.

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TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900  
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

ALFRED H. BARR, JR.  
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH IN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

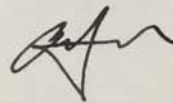
July 15, 1946

Dear Jim:

I just now read your essay on "Women Artists and O'Keeffe." It seems to me really beautifully written. All my compliments.

Thanks for your good letter of July eleventh.

Sincerely,



Mr. James T. Soby  
29 Mountain Spring Road  
Farmington, Connecticut

ARB:np

*Have written Marga about  
your weekend invitation - she  
wished to look at things in  
Vermont - maybe in the  
fall when the Cobble are back,  
too?*

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DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE  
JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY, DIRECTOR  
DOROTHY C. MILLER, CURATOR

August 6, 1946

Dear Jim,

I knew there was something else I wanted to say to you the other day. How much I liked your piece on Georgia O'Keeffe in the Saturday Review of Literature. I have been intending ever since before the Fourth to write you about it. Stieglitz was very pleased with it. He spoke at length about it the last time I saw him. And Georgia was very touched.

All best to Nellie and you,

As ever,



Mr. James Thrall Soby  
29 Mountain Spring Road  
Farmington, Conn.

JJS:ja

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# GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

Paintings — 1943

January 11 — March 11, 1944

AN AMERICAN PLACE

509 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK 22

WEEKDAYS 10 A. M. - 6 P. M. SUNDAYS 3 - 6 P. M.

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## About Painting Desert Bones

I have picked flowers where I found them —

Have picked up sea shells and rocks and pieces of wood where there were sea shells and rocks and pieces of wood that I liked

When I found the beautiful white bones on 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

A pelvis bone has always been useful to any animal that has it ———— quite as useful as a head I suppose. For years in the country the pelvis bones lay about the house indoors and out — always underfoot — seen and not seen as such things can be — seen in many different ways. I do not remember picking up the first one but I remember from when I first noticed them always knowing I would one day be painting them. A particularly beautiful one that I found on the mountain where I went fishing this summer started me working on them

I was the sort of child that ate around the raisin on the cookie and ate around the hole in the doughnut saving either the raisin or the hole for the last and best

so probably — not having changed much — when I started painting the pelvis bones I was most interested in the holes in the bones — what I saw through them — particularly the blue from holding them up in the sun against the sky as one is apt to do when one seems to have more sky than earth in one's world —

They were most wonderful against the Blue — that Blue that will always be there as it is now after all man's destruction is finished

I have tried to paint the Bones and the Blue

Georgia O'Keeffe

## LIST OF PAINTINGS: 1943

1. Pelvis — Front
2. Pelvis — Side
3. Pelvis with Pedernal
4. Pelvis with the Moon
5. Pelvis with the Distance
6. Pelvis with Shadows and the Moon
7. Pelvis —
8. Cottonwood Tree
9. Cottonwood Tree in Spring
10. Dead Cottonwood Tree
11. Dead Piñón Tree
12. Pedernal — my front yard
13. Cliffs beyond Abiquiu — my back yard
14. Cliffs beyond Abiquiu — Dry Waterfall
15. White Flower on Red Earth I
16. White Flower on Red Earth II
17. Head with Broken Pot — 1943
18. Horns
19. The Black Place —