Whitney Museum of American Art

Madison Avenue at 75th Street New York, New York 10021 (212) 570-3633

For Release

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WHITNEY MUSEUM EXHIBITS ITS O'KEEFFE WORKS

"Concentration: Georgia O'Keeffe" continues the series of exhibitions presenting the work of major artists represented in depth in the Permanent Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Sponsored by Champion International Corporation, the exhibition is on view at the Museum from July 8 through October 4.

The first work by Georgia O'Keeffe to enter the Permanent Collection was purchased by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1931 and was included in the inaugural exhibition of the Whitney Museum that fall. The following spring two additional paintings were acquired, The White Calico Flower and The Mountain, New Mexico, both painted in 1931. Single Lily with Red of 1928 was added to the collection in 1933. Around the same time, O'Keeffe's work was shown in the Museum's first Biennial Exhibition. Abstraction, 1926, which was included with four other O'Keeffes in the Museum's important 1935 exhibition, "Abstract Painting in America," was purchased some 20 years later, in 1958.

O'Keeffe's work was shown frequently in group shows at the Whitney Museum in the ensuing years, and in 1970 the Museum mounted the most comprehensive retrospective of her work ever presented. Since that date the Museum has regularly exhibited her work and has acquired four paintings and a drawing. Drawing IV, a charcoal done in 1959, was donated by Chauncey L. Waddell in 1974 in honor of retiring Director John I. H. Baur. It was her first work on paper to enter the collection. This was joined in 1977 by It Was Blue and Green, 1960, from the Lawrence H. Bloedel Bequest. Black Place Green, 1949, (shown at the Museum in the 1950 Painting Annual, as well as in her 1970 retrospective) was received in 1979 as a Promised 50th Anniversary Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard D. Lombard. Two other O'Keeffe paintings were presented as 50th Anniversary Gifts:

(more)

Soby, J.T. and Miller, Dorothy C. Romantic Painting in America, NY, 1943.

Flower Abstraction, 1924, a promised and partial gift of Sandra Payson; and Black and White, 1930, acquired through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. R. Crosby Kemper.

The Whitney Museum holdings of work by O'Keeffe are as inclusive as any except those institutions that received substantial portions of the Alfred Stieglitz estate. O'Keeffe, when presented with a list of her works in the Permanent Collection a few years ago, remarked, "It isn't bad, is it?"

Georgia O'Keeffe was born in 1887 and grew up near Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. In 1902 she moved with her family to Williamsburg, Virginia. Having decided at the age of 12 to become an artist, and encouraged by a teacher, she went to the Art Institute of Chicago in 1905. She came to New York in 1907 for a year to study at the Art Students League. During this period she first visited Alfred Stieglitz's Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession (later known as 291). After another brief period in Chicago she returned to her family in Virginia, but by 1912 was working in Amarillo, Texas, as an art teacher-supervisor. Two years later she came back to New York to study with Arthur Wesley Dow at Teachers College. In 1915 she took a teaching position in Columbia, South Carolina. There she created her first mature work, a group of abstract charcoal drawings. Without her knowledge these works were shown by a friend to Stieglitz, who exhibited them the following spring. In 1917 in Canyon, Texas, where she had gone to teach, she produced her most inspired and visionary watercolors, which were exhibited in a solo show at 291.

The following year O'Keeffe returned to New York. Stieglitz had offered to support her for a year, enabling her for the first time to devote all her energies to her art. (This was the beginning of their long relationship; they married in 1924.) Between 1918 and 1925 Stieglitz organized several shows for Mitchell Kennerly's Anderson Galleries auction house. Among these was a joint exhibition of his work and O'Keeffe's. The last Stieglitz-Anderson Galleries exhibition was "Seven Americans" in 1925 in which O'Keeffe was shown with Demuth, Dove, Hartley, Marin, Stieglitz, and Strand. Stieglitz then opened the Intimate Gallery at the Anderson Galleries. Here and at its successor, An American Place, he annually showed O'Keeffe's work through 1946. By the mid-1920s O'Keeffe was

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Soby, J.T. and Miller, Dorothy C. Romantic Painting in America, NY, 1943.

able to make a living from her art and was given her first museum show, a small retrospective at the Brooklyn Museum.

Starting in 1929 O'Keeffe began spending summers in New Mexico (she had first briefly visited there in 1918), and in 1949, after the death of Stieglitz three years earlier, moved there permanently. Two major retrospectives of her work were presented in the 1940s -- at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1943 and at The Museum of Modern Art in 1946. Her work of the next decade was not shown until 1955, at Edith Halpert's Downtown Galleries. In her 60s O'Keeffe began regularly traveling outside the United States, with trips to Mexico, Europe, South America, and Asia. For the first time the places she visited did not appear in her paintings; her subjects remained based in the New Mexico landscape.

In 1970-71 the largest retrospective ever assembled of O'Keeffe's work, organized by the Whitney Museum, traveled to Chicago and San Francisco. This exhibition marked a turning point in public acclaim for her art, and the exhibition catalogue, with an essay by Lloyd Goodrich, continues to be the most substantial art-historical discussion of her achievement.

"Concentrations," which originated in 1980, has presented the Whiteny Museum's holdings of work by Charles Burchfield, Alexander Calder, Stuart Davis, Gaston Lachaise, Maurice Prendergast, Ad Reinhardt, Charles Sheeler, and John Sloan. All the exhibitions and their related publications, including "Concentration: Georgia O'Keeffe," have been organized by Patterson Sims, Associate Curator, Permanent Collection, and sponsored by Champion International Corporation.

Georgia O'Keeffe: A Concentration of Works from the Permanent Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art by Patterson Sims. 32 pages; 18 black-and-white illustrations, color cover. Paper $4.

Press Information: Linda Gordon or Susan Carlino (212) 570-3633

JUNE 1981

Soby, J.T. and Miller, Dorothy C. Romantic Painting in America, NY, 1943.

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☆ Black Bird with Snow-Covered Hills . . . design contributed by Georgia O'Keeffe of the United States of America to benefit UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. ☆ L'oiseau survolant des collines . . . composition de Georgia O'Keeffe (Etats-Unis d'Amérique) — offerte à l'UNICEF, le Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'enfance. ☆ Pájaro y montañas cubiertas de nieve . . . obra de Georgia O'Keeffe, de los Estados Unidos de América. Contribución al UNICEF, el Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia. ☆ Черная птица над снежными холмами — рисунок Джорджии О'Кифф (Соединенные Штаты Америки), подаренный Детскому фонду Организации Объединенных Наций (ЮНИСЕФ). ☆ 雪山黑鸟…乔治亚·奥基夫（美国）画　赠给联合国儿童基金会。

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Soby, J.T. and Miller, Dorothy C. Romantic Painting in America, NY, 1943.

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This is our Door

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Soby, J.T. and Miller, Dorothy C. Romantic Painting in America, NY, 1943.

NAME
DATE
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Author
Title
Vol.

1887 - born

1905-1906 - Art Institute, Chicago

1907 - Art Students League

summer 1912 - meets Bement

1912-1913 - Amarillo

summer 1913 - Bement

1913-1914 - Amarillo

summer 1914 Bement

1914-1915 Arthur Dow, Columbia

summer 1915 - Bement

fall 1915 - begins teaching in S. Carolina

spring 1916 - at Teachers College, meets Stieglitz

summer 1916 - Bement

fall 1916 - teaching in Canyon, Texas

spring 1917 - one-woman show at 291, comes to NY

summer 1917 - teaches in Texas, then takes trip
to Colorado, sees N. Mex. for first time

spring 1918 - Siteglitz offers her a year of
study, to begin at the end of the summer
when she left Texas for the last time

Nov 1917

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In thinking of Miss O'Keeffe, my mind drifts back inevitably to another distinguished American artist, Albert Pinkham Ryder. He, too, in his landscapes and in his more deliberately symbolic pictures, sought to use the objective fact as a means of projecting a more interior and less articulate world; but, like Blake and Redon, his mind ran most easily in the groove of literary myths, and in his paintings of Time Riding Around a Racetrack or the Witches in Macbeth or Jonah and the Whale, he was dependent upon irrelevant suggestions for his theme, conveying by literary allusion feelings for which he had no direct language. Miss O'Keeffe has found her symbols without the aid of literary accessories; hers is a direct expression upon the plane of painting, and not an illustration by means of painting of ideas that have been verbally formulated. Indeed, Miss O'Keeffe's world cannot be verbally formulated; for it touches primarily on the experiences of love and passion. Whitman said that the best was that which must be left unsaid, and anyone who has reflected upon his passionate experiences is always a little appalled at the fact that they become so inarticulate in actual life, or so evasive, so skittishly evasive, when they seize hold of the poet.

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Alfred Stieglitz
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O'KEEFFE AND MATISSE*

Miss O'Keeffe is perhaps the most original painter in America today. The present show of her recent work leaves one wondering as to what new aspects of life she will make her own. I do not wish to dwell on her paintings as separate canvases, although in The Wave, and the sun blazing behind The Shelton, and in what is nomina[illegible] more ab- stract [illegible] ellence one might [illegible] e paintings come f[illegible] is so well ground[illegible] it keeps on produc[illegible] he medium of appl[illegible] ks, now in high bu[illegible] into sym- bols of [illegible]

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The premonitions of love, its pre-nuptial state as it were, are the constant themes of poetry; but in literature love and passion retain something of the desire of the moth for the star; when we become conscious of them in other terms, we are faced either by the empty swaggering of a Swinburne or a Wilde, whose personal history gives one reason to doubt if they had anything more than a literary background for their emotions, or by the all too literal allusions of a Rochester. The fact is that words strike love stone-cold; what it is, is something much too deep in the blood for words to ejaculate; and when driven to such an indirect medium, the result is not the original quality of passion or sexual intimacy at all, but obscenity —which is but the ashes from an extinguished fire.

What is true of love holds for other emotions and feelings: if their warm impalpability is to be extracted from consciousness, they must be transformed by painting into their own special symbols, and not first done into a verbal medium; a blasted tree may convey more human anguish than the most scarified and tear-stained face, labeled Antigone. Perceiving this fact, and creating images that are as palpable as flesh and as austere as a geometric figure, Miss O'Keeffe has created a noble instrument of expression, which speaks clearly to all who have undergone the same experiences or been affected by the same perceptions. She has beautified the sense of what it is to be a woman; she has revealed the intimacies of love's juncture with the purity and the absence of shame that lovers feel in their meeting; she has brought what was inarticulate and troubled and confused into the realm of conscious beauty, where it may be recalled and enjoyed with a new intensity; she has, in sum, found a language for experiences that are otherwise too intimate to be shared. To do this steadily in fresh forms, and to express by new expedients in design—as in the filling of a large canvas with the corolla of a flower—her moods and meanings: these are the signs of a high æsthetic gift. A minor painter might achieve this once; and would perhaps carve a prosperous career by doing it over and over again; Miss O'Keeffe, on the contrary, has apparently inexhaustible depths to draw upon, and each new exhibition adds richness and variety to her central themes. Her place is secure.

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Miss O'Keeffe has not discovered a new truth of optics, like Monet, nor invented a new method of æsthetic organization, like the Cubists; and while she paints with a formal skill which combines both objective representation and abstraction, it is not by this nor by her brilliant variations in color that her work is original. What distinguishes Miss O'Keeffe is the fact that she has discovered a beautiful language, with unsuspected melodies and rhythms, and has created in this language a new set of symbols; by these means she has opened up a whole area of human consciousness which has never, so far as I am aware, been so completely revealed in either literature or in graphic art. Unlike the painters who have taken refuge in abstract art to hide their inner barrenness, Miss O'Keeffe has something to communicate; and the human significance of her pictures is enriched rather than contracted by the symbols and the formal figures she employs.

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Northrop, F.S.C. The Meeting of East and West. NY, 1947 (p. 161-164 passim)
Rich, Daniel Catton. Georgia O'Keeffe. Forty Years of Her Art. Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Mass, 1960.
Rose, Barbara. American Art Since 1900: A Critical History. NY, 1967.
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Gregory, Alexis

amine them five hundred years hence, the only inference he could draw would be that our civilization lacked an aesthetic sense.

Miss O'Keeffe's paintings, on the other hand, would tell much about the departure of Victorian prudery and the ingrowing consciousness of sex, in resistance to a hard external environment; were Sherwood Anderson's novels destroyed, were every vulgar manifestation in the newspapers forgotten, were the papers of the Freudian psychologists burned, her pictures would still be a witness; for, apart from their proper beauty and significance, they reveal and refocus many of the dominant aspects of our time. It is the same with Matisse. He began his career as a conventional painter of "studies"; gradually, two things developed in his work: a clarity of structure, a feeling for what we were executing in other forms with the aid of equations and mechanical drawings, and, side by side with this, a certain lush sensual quality, conveyed partly by color and partly by sleek oriental women and soft upholstery. Is not this the essence of our contemporary spiritual dilemma? There is war between our vital needs and our mechanical routine. Looking at Matisse's pictures, I remembered a factory I had recently inspected, in which the machinery was here and there furtively plastered with pictures of variously naked hussies, cut out from contemporary magazines of "art." There was the exact equivalent in "life." Is not the conflict, indeed, pretty obvious everywhere? The artist, unconsciously perhaps, attempts to transmute it into beauty; but the divorce is a critical one, and the passage to beauty not easy. Matisse succeeds best, I think, in his still-lifes, where color and form are orchestrally handled in superb, intricate, vibrant designs.

LEWIS MUMFORD.

LIST OF PAINTINGS—1927

1 NEW YORK—NIGHT
2 A BUILDING, N. Y.—NIGHT
3 THE SHELTON AT NIGHT
4 EAST RIVER NO. 1
5 EAST RIVER NO. 2
6 EAST RIVER NO. 3
7 LAKE GEORGE—AUTUMN
8 PINK ROSE
9 LILY—WHITE WITH BLACK
10 LILY—YELLOW NO. 1
11 LILY—YELLOW NO. 2
12 LILY—YELLOW NO. 3
13 WHITE PETUNIA WITH SALVIA NO. 1
14 WHITE PETUNIA WITH SALVIA NO. 2
15 WHITE PETUNIA WITH SALVIA NO. 3
16 WHITE ROSE WITH LARKSPUR NO. 1
17 WHITE ROSE WITH LARKSPUR NO. 2
18 WHITE ROSE—ABSTRACTION
19 WHITE ROSE—ABSTRACTION WITH PINK
20 DARK IRIS NO. 1
21 DARK IRIS NO. 2
22 DARK IRIS NO. 3
23 SKUNK CABBAGE
24 PANSY WITH FORGET-ME-NOTS
25 THE RED HILLS WITH SUN
26 RED MAPLE
27 PINK SWEET PEAS
28 AUTUMN LEAF—A
29 AUTUMN LEAF—B
30 PURPLE PETUNIA
31 GRAPES NO. 1
32 GRAPES NO. 2
33 RED POPPY
34 RED POPPIES
35 ABSTRACTION WHITE
36 ABSTRACTION BLACK
37 ABSTRACTION BLUE
38 PEACH
39 PEACH WITH GLASS
40 SEAWEED
41 ABSTRACTION—WHITE ROSE

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Gregory, Alexis

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 —

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Gregory Alexis

Some Recent O'Keeffe Letters

These eight letters were written from Ghost Ranch, New Mexico, by Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz. The letters are dated July 29, August 16, August 20, August 22, August 25, August 26, September 3, September 20, 1937.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON—ABOUT 5—

I've been at painting all day—it began to rain so I have driven back almost to the house—am sitting here where the view is particularly good—the car all shut up tight letting it rain—It is better than going to the house and getting all wet getting out. I've been painting an old dead cedar against those purple hills I've painted so often. It is a tree that I made a drawing of long ago when I first came up here—I've been working on it yesterday and today—it looks promising. It's one of those things I've had in my so-called mind for a long time.

I've been having the girl bring me a cup of coffee at six, mornings—Then I manage to get up and out by 6:30. Am beginning to feel very good. When it rains I sleep with only a very little air coming in and my nose feels fairly well. The week has been rather gray with a little rain afternoons sometimes—

Last night the children gave a play that the governess wrote and helped them with—It was given out on the porch after supper,—was very amusing. It was amusing to see the way parents are effected by their children's capers. After that they danced. I only looked on with Pete, one of the ranch hands—half Indian and half a very good French line—He was working for Mabel when I was in Taos and has been here a couple of years. He is very handsome and a beautiful dancer when he dances but he sat by me most of the evening. On my other side was the Harper man's little son—10 years old—he stutters, but Pete and I both think him the most interesting child here. He has quite attached himself to me, to his father's surprise. I think it is because I admired his hat. At ten when the children went to bed—I went too and to sleep.

At noon today Arthur Pack told me he had a wire from Peggy Bok, asking for accommodations for her family and four grown ups on August 9th, so maybe she and Henwar and the family will come—It would be nice—She said they wanted to stay two weeks—I hope they come—All the people are very nice—

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They are all people with their children of all ages and they come for the outdoor things they can do.

You see, there isn't really any news—

I must drive to the house. I see Arthur and several people standing on his front porch looking at me. He probably thinks I am stuck in the mud or something like that.

The rain makes everything such a beautiful color I wish you could see it—a little bit of low sun through the clouds makes it really lovely.

The tooth brushes came today—Thank you very much. Did you find the clothes brush and put it in your trunk—We need it in New York—

It has stopped raining—and the dinner bell rang—I'll be going in now really—

I had a letter from Einstein today written before you got to town.

Am anxious for your N. Y. report.

GOOD SUNDAY MORNING TO YOU!

We have had much excitement this morning. My antelope friend appeared and stalked all around the house keeping us all at a safe distance. He is very beautiful—but I do not wish to meet him empty handed.

The prints you sent came two or three days ago. Thank you, but I do not care for myself.

I think I am through with my tree—It is the first thing I have done that when I stand it by the window and look at it—then look out the window—it looks like what I see out the window, tho it was painted a mile away. I think it really looks like here. Even at that I don't think it very good—I'll do it again.

Every night after supper when the shadows are long and the sun hits brightly on unexpected spots—Henwar, Peggie and I—sometimes some of the others—drive up to my high mesa where we can see all sorts of things in all directions—we sit there watching till it is almost dark—then come over here and sit on the roof till between 9 and 10—that is late for us as we all get up early. They all love it here—looking at it as I do.

Last night the moon on the high long cliff back of the house was wonderful—

I think I never enjoyed being with so many people at once before—The Irishman is rare—you will meet him next winter—He will see your clouds.

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Henwar, Peggie and I are going to Cady Wells for lunch.
I know you would like this house full this way.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON—

I had the paper today but no letter—however I am pleased to have the paper.

My letter day before yesterday was a scratch—I forgot to tell you that when we went down to Cady Wells he told me that Walker died—a few days before—Ethel had taken him to Tennessee for burial—I was much distressed and know you will be too—gives me a very strange feeling—I have done so many things here with him—gone so many places—all up and down the roads I know so well. A person seems strangely near when they are gone—both Demuth and Walker.

Yesterday afternoon after supper—Peggie—Henwar and Ben—the second child, and Felix Green and Spud Johnson, who came up for the day, and I got into the station wagon and drove off into the evening up to the U. S. Hill—That is about 20 miles this side of Taos. Up in the high mountain country we found a little open meadow—big trees all round the edge—We made a fire—it was lovely moonlight—Sat around a bit then got into our sleeping bags. I didn't sleep much—The fire and the moon and the big trees—it was lovely—The drive up nice too. Peggie and I sat on the second seat—the three men in front—the little boy behind—Peggie is really a lovely person—The moon so bright it seemed we could see the color in everything—We were all up early—Henwar making the fire and the coffee—I had put the coffee in the kettle all ready yesterday—eggs and bacon and fruit juice out of cans and we were off down the mountain. We stopped at the first stream—washed, then dashed off up the Lobo Mountain through Taos to Frieda's to get Gerald Heard, who had been taken up there by the Huxleys. Huxley is tall and thin and pale—and his wife so thin and pale—the boy better—I tried once to read something of his and couldn't—I'll try again but I'm sure I'll fail—We all look so brown and healthy here it seems strange to think of anyone being here all summer and looking the way they look. They are great friends of Gerald Heard—

Well we were cold and wet with dew up on the mountain this morning and hot and dusty and tired when we got back here at about three—It rained on us for lunch—everyone had a good time—Frieda and Angelino are fine—he had

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made a cement swimming pool and the rain a couple of days ago washed out one wall 50 feet long.

I am still dirty—have only greased my sun and wind burn and brushed my hair and given everyone tea.

They get away on Monday—then I'll sit home alone but I have loved being with them and doing things with them.

GOOD MORNING—SUNDAY MORNING—

Lovely and still—11 o'clock—every one has gone somewhere—Peggie and Henwar have gone down to call on Marie—I am glad they decided to—to me it seemed the only thing to do.

They leave tomorrow—Last night after supper and into the moonlight we all walked up back of the main ranch house—one of my favorite places—up over the hills and low cliffs—the sunset over all the far away plains—cliffs—and the blue mountain—so very beautiful—They loved it—we walked up till we were all hot—then it began to rain a little—just enough to cool you but not really wet you.—It was bright moonlight as we came down—When we got over to this house—everyone seemed so pleased to be here—it is so still—so alone—so open all around—I love the way they love it—I feel it almost a personal flattery that they like it as I do. Felix and I went in the kitchen and fixed some iced fruit juice in a couple of pitchers—a pitcher—for there is only one—and a canning jar to be exact—and glasses—on a very large tray—then climbed to the roof with it where the others were—getting up the ladder with it was quite an adventure but we got there—Henwar had taken up a load of blankets—we all sat there in a row—talking—looking—drinking our juice—The two men—Gerald and Felix crept down one at a time to bed and left Peggie, Henwar and me in a huddle talking for a long time. They confided to me that it was their wedding anniversary—They didn't want the others to know because they didn't want any fuss or talk over it. When I came into my room with a small lantern Maggie gave me in my hand—it vaguely lighted the white room and through the very big window I could see the cliffs in the moonlight—bright—with the windmill wheel shining bright in front of them—it was wonderful in a weird sort of way—I had to call Henwar in to see it and when he made shadows on the wall with his hand it was all like

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a part of the outdoors—and very queer and beautiful. He and Peggie together are really fine—

They go tomorrow—I will be glad for the time we have had together—but am very ready to be getting to work. I have never had a finer time with so many people at once—sort of sparkling and alive and quiet all at the same time.

You would have liked it too and been a nice part of it.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT—

Finally I am alone here—They all got off for California yesterday morning—They wanted me to go along but it is time for me to be alone a bit and at my own doings. I went to Santa Fé yesterday afternoon thinking Claudie would come through and that I would look for Vernon Hunter and the Perrys—I found no one. Had my car serviced and rode back in the moonlight—a man named Comstock—Professor of Architecture at Princeton—drove down with me. He drove. We had dinner in town and drove back—I called Ethel Walker too—telephone disconnected so she is still at home somewhere in the middle west I suppose.

Today I painted all day. Walked for about ¾ of an hour before supper trying to find a way to get my car across four or five deep ditches to another tree I wanted to paint. I think I'll get across. You will laugh when I say that I have two new paintings tonight that I didn't have this morning— —

I miss all the Henwar outfit—miss them very much but I like getting to work.

Gerald Heard gave me his last book—very modestly as if it were something filthy—"The Third Morality"—It looks like something to read and think about even if he was so funny in his Irish way.

I found this written on some hard smooth sand in the shade of a tree where he had been walking—

Do not act as though
you were in the be
Know that you
are in the presence
and you will

He only gave me the book because I asked to borrow a copy Felix had. I didn't know he wrote books till the maid here told me she saw it and asked me about it—

Since they are gone even the sky is cloudy—can't even see any stars up on the roof. It was lovely moonlight at the time they were here.

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You sound a bit lonely up there on the hill—It makes me wish that I could be beside you for a little while—I suppose the part of me that is anything to you is there—even if I am here—

I WONDER HOW YOU ARE TONIGHT—

Funny the way I sometimes get a feeling that I would like to know right this minute how you are.

I was up early—painted all day—out in the car from 7 till 11—then the rest of the day indoors—and there it hangs on the wall looking at me—and I don't know what it looks like but I think I'll paint it again tomorrow—just some red hills—

At 5:30 I went out and walked—just out over the queer colored land—such ups and downs—so much variety in such a small space—It was grey—but even at that I was all in a sweat when I came in—outdoors with a breeze I was cool—

Maggie Johnson was at the house for supper—back from their pack trip—Bob not back—the Mexican they took along cut his foot and she brought him out to the doctor—After supper I went with her—their chauffeur and Pete to interpret to the Mexican family to tell them what had happened—It was beyond the end of the road about 15 miles from here—We got stuck in a little broken bridge—crossed a hay field—a stream—stones to step on very far apart—a field that had just been irrigated and was very wet—then the house up a little hill—a dog barking at us all the while out of the dark—Clay got a shovel and went back to dig the car out while Maggie with Pete to interpret told the family—and they were so distressed—a very old man—quite blind and thin but very alive in his way of moving about and gesticulating—Pete was so quiet and gentle with him—The house very poor but neat and orderly—I was interested in it all—it was quite beautiful—but sad—the old man was so worried. My shoes are a sight—and no good any more—I came home barefooted.

I've been up on the roof watching the moon come up—the sky very dark—the moon large and lopsided—and very soft—a strange white light creeping across the far away to the dark sky—the cliffs all black—it was weird and strangely beautiful.

Goodnight—I wonder how you are—

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SEPTEMBER 2—8:45 P.M.—

The wind is blowing hard—it doesn't often blow at night like this—

I have been painting all day—a painting that should be very good if I can really get it right—another cedar tree—a dead one against red earth but the red earth is most difficult—If this one doesn't go I'll try it again—At five I walked—I climbed way up on a pale green hill and in the evening light—the sun under clouds—the color effect was very strange—standing high on a pale green hill where I could look all round at the red, yellow, purple formations—miles all around—the color all intensified by the pale grey green I was standing on. It was wonderful—you would have loved it too—Just before I went to walk I had two letters from you—Walking by yourself in the evening—up the hill too—If I had been there I would have encouraged you—It is too bad you rode so much when Einstein was there—You sound lonely—and I wonder should I go to the lake and have two or three weeks with you before you go to town—I will if you say so—Wire me and I will pick right up and start. I guess my summer tennant will stay as long as I let her. I have not asked her.

The wind blowing tonight is like being on the water—a really lovely wind—the weather has been unsettled for ten days or so—morning always clear—afternoon cloudy—raining out in the distance if not here.

My plans are vague—Dave is expected here around the 15th—he has asked Ansel Adams too and expects me to go with them to the Grand Canyon the end of this month. I am not very crazy to go—I don't know why—I seem to be very satisfied here—or if you want me to I'll go home—I don't mind the idea of going to town—Maybe I'll get interested in the trip when Dave gets here—I don't know.

It is very hard work to turn out anything that looks like a good painting. I seem to be busy all day from six o'clock on and I don't get much done, and I seem to be good and tired by five. Am going to make myself walk or ride every day. There are so many things all about everywhere that I haven't explored yet—and I need the exercise.

I had a letter from Peggie today—very nice letter—I think they all had a good time like I had a good time with them.

Must get to bed—this is late for me—and this is horrid paper.

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GOOD MORNING MR. STIEGLITZ!

And a good morning it is—Almost ten and I just got out of bed—sitting on a great big stump of a tree that I brought into the patio—So big I could barely lift it—Frieda's lovely plant on the table besides me. My back to the sun and the landscape—a nice place to write—

Yesterday I loafed all day—was tired from riding—didn't get up till nearly ten, then sat on the porch in the sun talking with Dave and Adams and Long—over at the other house while a man worked to get the rattles out of my car—The sort of day when it is hot in the sun and cold in the shade.

I drove over here for lunch with Archie—the gardner—like La Verna's food best and eating with all of them at night is enough for me—After lunch I went to bed till about four then went over to the other house—let Adams have my wagon to go photographing and Dave and I went riding till 7:30.

It was the best ride I've ever had here—up and down all sorts of places that we could only get the horses to go by getting off and pulling several times—places I would never dare to go alone and cowboys wouldn't be much interested—perfectly mad looking country— hills and cliffs and washes too crazy to imagine all thrown up into the air by God and let tumble where they would. It was certainly as spectacular as anything I've ever seen—and that was pretty good—The evening glow on a cliff much higher than these here in a vast sort of red and gold and purple amphitheatre while we sat on our horses on top of a hill of the whitish green earth—There was no trail to go back on but the one we went in on and it got dark so I could barely see that my horse was following his own tracks back—Then the moon came up big—almost full and we could see out toward the trail and an easier way home. As we got to the top of the last ridge and looked down into the valley we had just crossed toward the moon, it was as beautiful as anything I have ever seen—

It was a good ride.

After supper I got the key to the Johnson house from the housekeeper and we all went there—the sitting room—a good big room all done up for the winter—furniture all in the middle of the room covered with a vast piece of unbleached muslin—carpet all covered with newspapers—We dug out the piano—a very good Steinway Grand and Adams played for us—He plays very well—Dave and

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Long and I all stretched out on the floor on the newspapers—It was very good—He really plays well tho he doesn't get through the whole thing very often—After a while the housekeeper came over and brought cans of beer—only Adams and I took it—then after a little Arthur and Phoebe crept in—guess Arthur was worried to have people go into Bob's house like that—Well—I'm sure nothing pleasanter ever happened under its roof—I drove home alone—the open car—so bright and I didn't need to turn lights on the car—drove very slowly—right up to the face of the cliff and sat there alone a long time—It was so bright I could see all the color in the night.

It was 12 when I got to bed but I feel fine this morning—not a bit tired from the rough ride—Connie brought me three letters and your telegram about going to town on the 24th, when she brought the beer—

I'm glad Dave drags me out to ride—he is very persistent—and I enjoy it so much, but I can't do much painting at the same time—However, I think it is good to do and it pleases me that today I'm not tired—it never makes me very stiff—

Well, that is what I'm about—I'm really fine.

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That she is such a voice is proven by the huge following she has, a following that asserts itself spontaneously. Alfred Stieglitz who has sponsored her work for 22 years in the various galleries, "291," Intimate Gallery and at present "An American Place," has fought for recognition of O'Keeffe as he has for John Marin, Arthur G. Dove and others. But his fight in O'Keeffe's case has had mainly to do with official recognition. Public recognition was forthcoming immediately for O'Keeffe from the opening day of her first show in 1916. The "people" of Romain Rolland found in her work a mirror of their feelings and aspirations. For she makes no attempt to illustrate American events and scenes but rather sets down her own feelings as they are mirrored through simple objects, flowers, skulls, stones, feathers, barns and sometimes abstractions — anything that calls forth in her a feeling of "elevation" for want of a better word to describe a purely visual phenomenon. She knows that what she feels and expresses is close to many people and she speaks for these people with a confidence that by being simply herself she will satisfy them.

Written in 1938 — *Not for publication.* WILLIAM EINSTEIN

ABOUT MYSELF

A flower is relatively small. Everyone has many associations with a flower— the idea of flowers. You put out your hand to touch the flower — lean forward to smell it — maybe touch it with your lips almost without thinking — or give it to someone to please them. Still — in a way — nobody sees a flower — really — it is so small — we haven't time — and to see takes time like to have a friend takes time. If I could paint the flower exactly as I see it no one would see what I see because I would paint it small like the flower is small.

So I said to myself — I'll paint what I see — what the flower is to me but I'll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking time to look at it — I will make even busy New Yorkers take time to see what I see of flowers.

Well — I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flower you hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower and you write about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower — and I don't.

Then when I paint a red hill, because a red hill has no particular association for you like the flower has, you say it is too bad that I don't always paint flowers. A flower touches almost everyone's heart. A red hill doesn't touch everyone's heart as it touches mine and I suppose there is no reason why it should. The red hill is a piece of the *bad lands where even the grass is gone. Bad lands roll away outside my door — hill after hill — red hills of apparently the same sort of earth that you mix with oil to make paint. All the earth colors of the painter's palette are out there in the many miles of bad lands. The light naples yellow through the ochres — orange and red and purple earth — even the soft earth greens. You have no associations with those hills — our waste land — I think our most beautiful country — You may not have seen it, so you want me always to paint flowers.

I fancy this all hasn't much to do with painting.

I have wanted to paint the desert and I haven't known how. I always think that I can not stay with it long enough. So I brought home the bleached bones as my symbols of the desert. To me they are as beautiful as anything I know. To me they are strangely more living than the animals walking around — hair, eyes and all with their tails switching. The bones seem to cut sharply to the center of something that is keenly alive on the desert even tho' it is vast and empty and untouchable — and knows no kindness with all its beauty.

January, 1939 GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

**Bad Lands refer to*
Ghost Ranch Country
Near Abiquiu, New Mexico.

than "anything he may say — 'We are out of it
we are out of it, we are out of it?'" (Cheman, ibid,
p. 273)

"Practically speaking, 291 was therefore never a group,
it was more a protective association." (ibid, p. 277)

Stieglitz

"Many of my prints exist in one example only. Negatives of the early work have nearly all been lost or destroyed... Every print I make, even from one negative, is a new experience, a new problem. For, unless I am able to say — add — I am not interested." (statement in 1921 catalog for his show at Anderson Galleries).

Once Brancusi told Stieglitz, "Avec vous, je suis libre."

An American Place was on 17th floor of an office bldg at 509 Madison (54th)

"I have heard O'Keeffe say, 'Done, he's got us beaten.'" (Arthur G. Dove, in Cowen + A.S., p. 244)

"Why does Stieglitz constantly repeat — and his photographs voice the sentiment more eloquently than anything he may say — 'We are out of it, we are out of it, we are out of it?'" (Cheman, ibid, p. 273)

"Practically speaking, 291 was therefore never a group, it was more a protective association." (ibid, p. 277)

MY COLLECTION OF ALFRED STIEGLITZ PHOTOGRAPHS - GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

When Stieglitz was in a bad humor he tore up and threw away such piles of prints that I began to think from what went into the waste basket I would make a collection for myself. I started with 4 by 5 prints. I found that by mounting a rather poor print with a margin a trace more than 1/16 of an inch I could make it look better than it was and better than it looked mounted on a large piece of paper as he mounted them. In time when he saw what I was doing he laughed and made folders for my little prints. I could keep my collection in the 4 or 5 boxes that the printing paper came in so it took up little room. As time went on I had several little boxes. Each print with its very narrow white mounting margin put in a little folder, a trifle larger than its mount, folded in a piece of writing paper, boxed in the little boxes the collection grew. He laughed about it and sometimes gave me a good print. Sometimes sent me a print with a letter when I was away. At times he would look at my prints and remark, "Did I throw that print away?" and to my answer, "Yes you did" he would often remark, "It looks very well the way you have mounted it." Finally I kept a few 8 by 10 prints from the waste basket. Only one of my waste basket collection was mounted on a large mat as he mounted. It was a Lake George Barn and is the only print of that negative. He wanted it back with his other prints. I said, "No, waste basket prints that I have saved from the waste basket are mine." He didn't care but whenever he saw that print he looked at it with interest.

There are a few prints of negatives that he thought not very good and never printed again. I could see what he meant but they were photographs of places or things that I liked so I kept them.

September 7, 1973

Dear Mr. Tomkins:

Thanks for your letter. We will look forward to seeing you on the 24th. You may stay at my house as Santa Fe is fifty five miles away.

If you will be renting a car and driving, drive north from Santa Fe to Espanola and turn left on the road to Chama. Then go about twenty five miles to Abiquiu. You will see a white Chevron station on the right, and turn sharp left by the post office and on up the hill. My house is the first one as you bear left and is circled by a hedge followed by an adobe wall. Drive in through the second entrance by the adobe wall and blow your horn at the gate inside, and someone should recieve you.

If I am not there, I will be at my other house about sixteen miles further up the highway. Enter at the Ghost Ranch gate on the right, turn left at first fork, and after about a blocks distance turn sharply left again. It will say "dead end," but continue about two miles and you will find my house on the left shortly after first set of buildings.

We laugh as we send these complicated directions, but they are quite a protection.

Hope you can find us on the 24th.

Yours sincerely,

Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe

Abiquiu, New Mexico

August 29, 1973

Mr. Calvin Tomkins
THE NEW YORKER
25 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Tomkins:

You may come either September 24-26 or during the second week in October. Please let Miss O'Keeffe know as soon as possible when to expect you so that she will not schedule other visitors at the same time.

Sincerely,

Virginia F. Robertson

Virginia F. Robertson

Abiquiu, New Mexico

August 9, 1973

Mr. Calvin Tomkins
Editorial Offices
THE NEW YORKER
25 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Tomkins:

I have read the ski lesson in THE NEW YORKER and LIVING WELL IS THE BEST REVENGE and the John Cage and part of Duchamp. I regret that there have been people here and I just couldn't get to it before.

I can't imagine what you can do with me, but would you wish to come for two or three days and we can see what we both think about it. There will be someone here from 31 August to 4 September. The week before or the week after would be possible - but probably the week after would be better.

Sincerely,

Georgia O'Keeffe

GO'K:vfr

THE BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library contains the principal rare book and manuscript collections of Yale University and serves as a center for research by students, faculty, and any other serious readers, whether connected with Yale or not. Materials do not circulate, but may be used in the reading room on the court level.

Believed to be the largest building in the world entirely devoted to rare books and manuscripts, the library has room in the central tower for 180,000 volumes and in underground bookstacks for over 600,000 volumes; it now contains over 250,000 volumes, as well as many thousands of manuscripts.

The building and its endowment are the gift of Edwin J. Beinecke, Yale 1907; Frederick W. Beinecke, Yale 1909 S.; the late Walter Beinecke, Yale 1910; and their families.

The building, of Vermont marble and granite, bronze, and glass, was designed by Gordon Bunshaft, of the firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill; the George A. Fuller Construction Company was the general contractor. The translucent marble panes of the exterior are one and one-quarter inches thick. The courtyard sculptures are by Isamu Noguchi, and represent time (pyramid), the sun (circle), and chance (cube).

Among the notable contents of the library are the Yale collections of American Literature, Western Americana, medieval manuscripts, ancient and modern literature and history, religion, early printed books, sporting books, ornithology, and 18th century newspapers.

On exhibition in the cases on the ground and mezzanine floors are the Gutenberg Bible, the first Western book printed from movable type; Audubon's Birds of America; a selection of great manuscripts and printed books; and recent gifts and purchases.

Doris Bry 11 East Seventy-third Street, New York, N.Y. 10021

July 28, 1973

Mr. Calvin Tomkins
The New Yorker
25 West 43th Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Tomkins:

Thank you for your letter of July 18.

I gather that Miss O'Keeffe now has two sets of your books - since those I sent her did not get there quickly - but have now arrived. They remind me of a foolish question that was never clear to me - the proverb which forms the title of the book on the Murphy's - on whom - or what - was the Revenge?

Had I not been entirely clear that there was some conflict between what you wish to do and what I am doing, I would not have written you as I did. Neither you nor Miss O'Keeffe are in a position to make this judgment. -

Nothing to be done about any of this - so we will see what happens.

Sincerely,

Doris Bry

Maya Pines, "The Brain Changers"
W.F. Thorpe, "Rangers Around the Earth"
Michael & Alpha ~~stay~~ waves

Send art books to O'K – Viking Dutton etc. She will finish ours wh from the weekend, + will speak to Doris

---

O'K – 4/1/74

Has been writing down abt painting for 35 yrs or more. Suggested by William Einstein, a relative of Stieglitz, and the only man besides Dennis she's ever liked to talk with abt painting. "I couldn't look at him when we talked – he was just someone I couldn't look at," so she'd look to the side. He encouraged her to write abt it. When her eyes went bad two years ago – "the world very suddenly became quite dim" – she couldn't continue painting. "But I've always been a very active person and I had to have something to do," so she began more seriously to work on writings. Often does it at night – doesn't sleep well. Writes on a large pad, + can't quite see what she's written. Then works with Mrs Robertson, her former secretary, who comes every weekend. O'K can't do it with Doris – they fight, + Doris wants to do it her way. "I'm just not comfortable talking to Doris." Sometimes they'll go over + over the text + make changes, and then end up going back to ~~the~~ one version.

Some are 1½ or 2 pages long, but most are shorter.

Painting now with Juan – don't need same kind of vision as in painting, can feel with hands. She liked Juan's saying to put her own self on the surface – as in painting

Earliest visual memory: a blond woman who came to visit her mother. O'K only abt 4 years old, + was told she couldn't possibly remember. "But I

the pattern of her dress – it was puffed out in the back & reached down to her ankles. And I remember her blonde hair that was so different from my mother's, which was dark."

Very strong visual sense must have led her to painting. Nothing else in her childhood and home – no exposure to art.

O'K bought the Abiquiu house & 4 acres for $500 – plus a $3000 contribution to the Church. Later, GOT more land. Half way down the arroyo for $100.

"I almost seem to think with my hands. It's only in drawing or painting that I realize what it is I want to do." That's the "imprint" that's lacking in recent art. "Maybe it's not important, how should I know?"

Joan Van Vleit – Alex Claudia. "I seem to have a talent for making people hate each other" – said with a chuckle. Joan says "the politics around here is something."

Legendary end of Wu Tao-tzu, greatest of China's figure painters: he is said to have disappeared into one of his own wall paintings

---

O'K: "Petra, outside Jerusalem, is one of the good places. The colors there are just impossible – from rose pink to a deep, dark blue." Dem astonishing but Petra impossible. Also dangerous – group of women drowned there the week after she visited.

The new blue chow, Inca, is only two months, and gets along perfectly with Pingo. "I don't think any of us deserves a dog. What could we ever do to earn that kind of devotion?"

May 7th, 1974
Abiquiu, New Mexico

Dear Calvin Tompkins,

I am sorry that I have been so long in writing you, but Mrs. Robertson has been sick for two weeks with the flu, and Juan was gone for a time also. Now Mrs. Robertson has had a heart attack, and is in bed again - so I'M not getting on very fast with the completion of my writings. I sent some of them to Doris, and she would like to show them to a publsisher with a small book that I have done on my drawings. Leonard Baskin is doing a special edition of the book, but another [illegible] regular edition might go along with what I am doing now . Maybe the two could be put together as one, maybe not. I think I met your agent several years ago over another book, but I don't remember him.

Basil Langton sent the photographs that you spoke of. They are a record of a pleasant day, but seem to me not to be good enough to go along with what you have written. I would like what I have written to have a very brief introduction - a few sentences that I think I have allready read to you. It may prove unpractical, and no one would want to print itThat way, but that is what I have in my so called mind. If I need to have anyone write an introduction, I would be very please d to have you do it. Thank you for the Marin book - enclosed is a check for it. Too bad it isn't a better book. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Georgia O'Keeffe

My typing is horrid and so is my spelling, but my pots are gettign fine-

Ja

PUBLISHER
TROY F. MARTIN

The Canyon News, Inc.

TELEPHONE 655-7121
CANYON, TEXAS 79015

Dear Mr. Tomkins,

I read your piece on O'Keeffe and liked it very much. In a letter to me, Ms. O'Keeffe said the reason she gave the interview to your instead of me was because "The New Yorker reaches more people than the Canyon News." I understand this.

However, Miss O'Keeffe has given me a letter to show to her various friends in Canyon telling them that she doesn't mind their speaking to me. One gentleman has now offered to show me O'Keeffe's letters to him. I think I shall write a book about Georgia. But first I have to complete a book I'm working on about Canyon. I think my book will show people exactly how O'Keeffe came to aesthetic "life" in this strange region of America.

Ann Melin

Ann Melin

answered 4/16/74

March 10, 1974

Mr. Calvin Tomkins
C/O The New Yorker
25 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Tomkins:

Having just struggled through another disastrous Wisconsin winter in which we had nearly forty inches of snow, freezing rain, weeks of sub-zero temperatures and a severe shortage of fuel in addition to an electric storm which knocked out all power for upwards of 12 hours, I find it a bit hard to take your characterization of Wisconsin as gentle in your profile of Georgia O'Keefe. I grew up in Madison, which is contiguous with Sun Prarie, and I can assure you that Wisconsin is gentle only in comparison with, say, the far reaches of Alaska or Canada. Not to say there aren't compensations, for there are, but the weather doesn't happen to be among them. Wisconsin can be lush on a spring day and the autumns are spectacular, but summer is awful and winter, well, I've said enough.

Be that as it may,however, I want you to know that I've greatly enjoyed your writing and continue sending copies of Living Well is the Best Revenge to friends whenever I see it remaindered. It is a remarkable book and you are a gifted and sensitive writer notwithstanding the remarks above.

Best wishes,

David Milofsky
3034 N. Farwell Ave.
Milwaukee, Wi 53211

P.S. If you are really curious about Wisconsin (though after this letter I don't see why you should be), see "The New Land" which was filmed in southwestern Wisconsin along the Mississippi.

Silver City, New Mexico
April 3, 1974

Mr. Calvin Tomkins
The New Yorker Magazine—

I want to tell you how very much I enjoyed your "Profile" in the March 4, 1974 issue featuring the life and work of Georgia O'Keeffe.

When Miss O'Keeffe was out in the Amarillo, Texas, plains country and was Director of Art at West Texas State Teachers College, I had the good fortune to have one year of art study under her direction. Miss O'Keeffe's instructions were always meaningful and more than ever I learned to know and appreciate the importance of creative design.

Being a native Texan myself, I was always pleased that Miss O'Keeffe seemed to understand and like our "wind-swept" West.

Mrs. Lorna H. Haston

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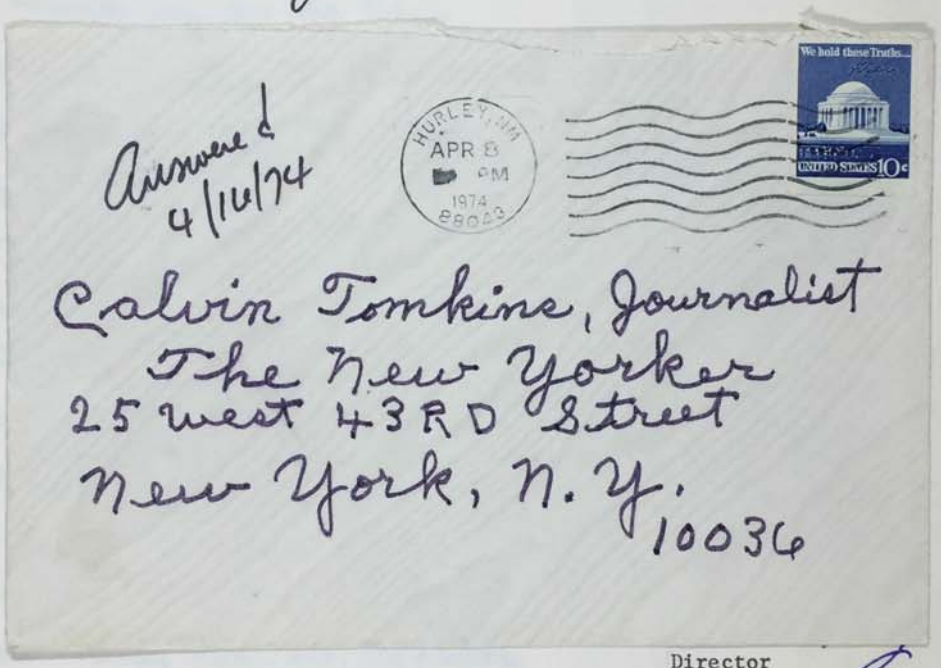
Editorial Office 812-337-5261
Design & Production 812-337-5563
Sales & Promotion 812-337-6657

Answered 4/16/74

March 8, 1974



Answered
4/16/74

Calvin Tomkins, Journalist
The New Yorker
25 West 43RD Street
New York, N.Y.
10036

Director

BP/pn
Enclosure

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Answered 4/16/74

March 8, 1974

Mrs. Lorena H. Hanton
505 w. College Ave.
Silver City, N.M.
88061

Director

BP/pn
Enclosure

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Answered 4/16/74

March 8, 1974

Mr. Calvin Tomkins
The New Yorker
25 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Tomkins:

You may recall that we wrote you a year ago about your Mekas profile. I am now writing again in admiration of your piece about Georgia O'Keeffe. In this case I hope very much that, whether or not we have the opportunity to be the publisher, you will decide to pursue the matter about this illustrious artist.

I have admired her work for many years. As a matter of fact, I have long been interested in her career together with those of Alfred Stieglitz, Mabel Dodge, and Frieda Lawrence. Should you decide to expand this material into a book, we should like very much once again to hear from you and to explore the possibilities of publication.

Cordially yours,

Bernard Perry
Director

BP/pn
Enclosure

17 March 74

Dear Cal Tomkins -

I'm a little slower getting 'round to writing you than I had intended, but the impulse is still strong. I might have written long ago, to thank you for the hours of enjoyment I have derived from your varied oeuvre, but now it seems imperative: thank you, this time, for the graceful, empathetic and rounded portrait of "Aunt" Georgia O'Keeffe (Stieglitz was my grand-uncle. The "Aunt" is within quotes because she forbade the term, which, among other things, must have denoted to her a stronger link to the Family than she, legitimately,

THE UNIVERS
OF NEW MEX
PRES

Mr. Colvin
The New Yo
25 West 43r
New York,

Dear Mr. T

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t/r

Anne d'Harnoncourt

Telephone POplar 5-0500 • Cable PHILMUSE

RODIN MUSEUM • PARKWAY AT 22nd STREET

desired.)

Among all the things that have been written about her, your piece is the most accurate, human, three-dimensional — devoid of facile characterization, replete with insights, responsive, and wonderfully fresh. It is apparent that she responded warmly to you, and found in you qualities that rightly set you apart from her past interlocutors. So thank you also for being her friend, and for limning her as pellucidly as her own paintings describe the world she sees.

With admiration and gratitude - and pleasant recollections too of distant Dalton days - Yours.

Sue Davidson Lowe

THE UNIVE
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Mr. Colv
The New
25 West 4
New York

Dear Mr.

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Director

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Anne d'Harnoncourt

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RODIN MUSEUM • PARKWAY AT 22nd STREET

THE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW MEXICO
PRESS

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87131

7 March 1974

Mr. Colvin
The New Y
25 West 43
New York,

Dear Mr.

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Hugh W. Treadwell
Hugh W. Treadwell
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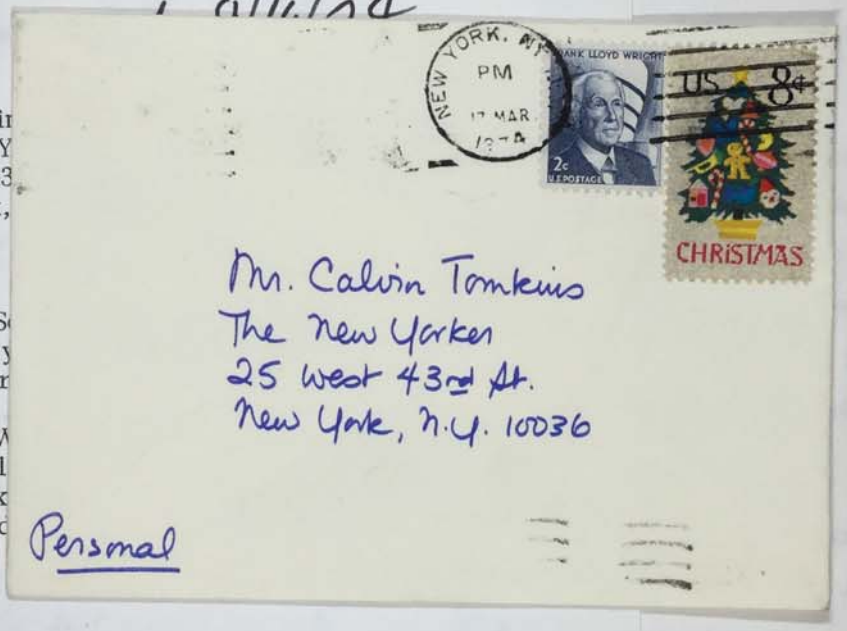

Anne d'Harnoncourt

Telephone POplar 5-0500 • Cable PHILMUSE

RODIN MUSEUM • PARKWAY AT 22nd STREET

THE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW MEXICO
PRESS

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87131

7 March 1974

Mr. Colvin
The New Y
25 West 43
New York,

Dear Mr.

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Hugh W. Treadwell
Hugh W. Treadwell
Director

t/r

Anne d'Harnoncourt

Telephone POplar 5-0500 • Cable PHILMUSE

RODIN MUSEUM • PARKWAY AT 22nd STREET

THE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW MEXICO
PRESS

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87131

7 March 1974

Answered 9/14/74

Mr. Colvin Tomkins
The New Yorker Magazine
25 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Tomkins:

Several of us here at the UNM Press have just read your article on Georgia O'Keeffe and were quite impressed.

We wonder if you are considering expanding this article into a small book. If you are, and if you care to explore publishing possibilities with us, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Sincerely yours,

Hugh W. Treadwell
Hugh W. Treadwell
Director

t/r

Anne d'Harnoncourt

Telephone POplar 5-0500 • Cable PHILMUSE

RODIN MUSEUM • PARKWAY AT 22nd STREET

PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART • FAIRMOUNT
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN PARKWAY AT TWENTY-SIXTH STREET • P.O. Box 7646 PHILA. 19101

March 11, 1974

Dear Calvin,

Hurray for you and Georgia O'Keeffe!
I'm so glad that your project materialized
and think it came out splendidly. I was so
afraid she would fade away before more of her
words got down on paper, but she comes through
with great strength and spirit.

What a pleasure!

with many thanks of all kinds

Anne

Anne d'Harnoncourt
Telephone POplar 5-0500 • Cable PHILMUSE
RODIN MUSEUM • PARKWAY AT 22nd STREET

When he died there were a few prints he had not mounted always lying around on the table. According to his idea there was something the matter with each one so he had not mounted it. I thought them too good to throw away so I added them to my collection. Finally I had so many little boxes I put them in the larger black boxes like he used to keep them together. When he wasn't there any more and I had to do something with everything that had been his I could think of nothin ople intere though

If I h have b help I in the lot o book bette

As yo print good prints he gave me.

126 EAST 79TH STREET

Thursday
28 February

Mr. Tom Kemi:

My thanks for presenting to those who will read your article the only accurate and sensitive article I've ever read on O'Keeffe. It was very beautiful —

Andrew Crispo

When he died there were a few prints he had not mounted always lying around on the table. According to his idea there was something the matter with each one so he had not mounted it. I thought them too good to throw away so I added them to my collection. Finally I had so many little boxes I put them in the larger black boxes like he used to keep them together. When he wasn't there any more and I had to do s[illegible] ...ld think of nothing better to [illegible] so that people interested in the [illegible] ...graphs...even though they are n[illegible] ...d them.

If I had given th[illegible] ...hey would soon have been manhand[illegible] ...ith Clyn Honaker's help I have taken [illegible] ...d mounted them in these frames. [illegible] ...helved like a lot of books. It [illegible] ...in the hand like a book and never be[illegible] ...ll photographs are better looked at [illegible]

As you look at th[illegible] ...s et. Sometimes prints sent me wi[illegible] ...ied and a few good prints he ga[illegible]

Question once record for a living Amer. artist was $120,000 for a O'Keeffe until this Oct. 1993 Scull sale, when a Johns "Double White Map" went for $240,000

When he died there were a few prints he had not mounted always lying around on the table. According to his idea there was something the matter with each one so he had not mounted it. I thought them too good to throw away so I added them to my collection. Finally I had so many little boxes I put them in the larger black boxes like he used to keep them together. When he wasn't there any more and I had to do s[illegible] could think of nothing better to [illegible] so that people interested in the [illegible]ographs...even though they are n[illegible] to[illegible] them.

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As you look at th[illegible]s[illegible]et. Sometimes prints sent me wi[illegible]ied and a few good prints he ga[illegible]

When he died there were a few prints he had not mounted always lying around on the table. According to his idea there was something the matter with each one so he had not mounted it. I thought them too good to throw away so I added them to my collection. Finally I had so many little boxes I put them in the larger black boxes like he used to keep them together. When he wasn't there any more and I had to do something with everything that had been his I could think of nothing better to do with my collection than to place it at Yale so that people interested in the Stieglitz papers can see something of the photographs...even though they are not the best prints and not mounted as he mounted them.

If I had given the prints in the box as I kept them for years they would soon have been manhandled and mutilated and some probably stolen so with Clyn Honaker's help I have taken them from their papers and folders and boxes and mounted them in these frames. They can be easily handled and looked at and shelved like a lot of books. It is my intention that they only be looked at in the hand like a book and never be hung on the wall. I even think that maybe all photographs are better looked at that way to really appreciate them.

As you look at them remember they are mostly from the waste basket. Sometimes prints sent me with letters. Things he left unmounted when he died and a few good prints he gave me.

THE NEW YORKER

* * PROFILES * *

December 10th, 1973
Abiquiu, New Mexico

Dear Mr. Tomkins:

I think you have made me much more interesting than I am. I have made a few corrections of facts - and of course you have my permission to use the letters you quote from on pages 13, 14, and 17 of your story. Could you please send me the galley sheets when they come for final inspection.

You seem to appreciate "my" country - maybe you would like to come back some day - .

Sincerely,

Georgia O'Keeffe

O'Keeffe

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PROFILES

ABSTRACTION—FLOWERS

TOWARD the close of a gloomy afternoon in November, 1915, a girl named Anita Pollitzer walked into the little picture gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue where for several years Alfred Stieglitz had been exposing the paintings of the French modernists to the gaze of a dismayed and irritated public. She had a roll of drawings under her arm; they had been sent, it appeared, by a friend of hers named Georgia O'Keeffe, a teacher of drawing in the public schools in Amarillo, Texas. "She told me particularly not to show these around—she said to throw them away when I'd done with them," the girl explained, impenitently, "but I just couldn't bear to. I felt I had to show them to somebody."

Stieglitz turned the gaslights a little higher, and the drawings were unrolled. They were flower subjects, done in charcoal, and the treatment was in the manner which, for want of a better word, has come to be called "abstract." Stieglitz looked at them; he knew at once that he had struck on something very close to genius, and, in spite of Miss Pollitzer's objections, he insisted on exhibiting them. "There'll be trouble when O'Keeffe hears about this!" she warned him.

THERE was trouble. O'Keeffe came flying on to New York; she marched into No. 291 with all her Irish anger flaring. "What do you mean by showing these drawings?" she demanded. "I gave you no permission at all." But Stieglitz, with his air of a weary prophet, wore down her wrath. They walked about the room together; he discovered that her attitude was mainly defensive—she was afraid that those strange interlacing patterns she had drawn from the hearts of flowers or from their curling petals would seem incomprehensible and foolish to others. "Do you know what they mean?" he asked her. "Do you think I'm an idiot?" she countered. He showed her some drawings by Matisse, Picasso, Braque; she was amazed to learn that others beside herself were trying to release design from the limitations of realism. In the end, when she went back to her schoolchildren in Texas, she had promised to send him all her drawings, for exhibition.

The drawings came: she sent them carelessly, two or a dozen in a bunch, without even bothering to insure them. When finally in 1917—with the war coming louder and louder, intervening between him and his friends, saddening him—Stieglitz decided to close the doors of No. 291 forever, he ended the history of that famous gallery with an exhibition of her work.

There was a hubbub among the critics. O'Keeffe came on to New York again, this time determined to stay. The drawings hadn't sold; she had no money, but she wanted to paint. Stieglitz lent her twelve hundred dollars, and she lived on that for a year, painting in a little back room she had rented in Fifty-ninth Street. She struggled through another year and then, in 1920, her first big uptown show was arranged, at the Anderson Galleries.

She was still unknown and still a mystery, but the aesthetic principles on which she and many other artists based their work had all been hashed and rehashed by eager and sometimes too-willing apologists. So the spectacle of an entire canvas devoted to the corolla of a flower, or of another composed of two straight lines and labelled simply "Abstraction II," was nowhere near so startling as formerly. O'Keeffe's show was a success. She happened to be present in the gallery when the first picture was sold. It was a flower study, and the price was four hundred dollars. O'Keeffe's face went white as the canvas itself—not at the price, as she later explained, but at the sudden realization that she would never see that painting any more.

SHE was born on a Wisconsin wheat farm, near the little town of Sun Prairie, in 1887. Her father, Francis O'Keeffe, was of course an Irishman; her mother, Ida Totto, was Hungarian. There were six other children—four girls, two boys. She lived in the little prairie town until she was fourteen—she remembers that a neighbor named Mrs. Mann taught her to copy pansies—and then in 1901 the whole family moved to Williamsburg, West Virginia.

They had their ups and downs. Francis O'Keeffe went into the trucking business, failed, and started over again. Mrs. O'Keeffe died. The children were marrying, moving away, but Georgia didn't want to get married; she wanted to be a painter, and so, in 1904, she was packed off to Chicago, to study at the Art Institute. A year later she came on to New York, and entered classes at the Art Students' League.

Georgia O'Keeffe

Old-timers at the League still remember her as she was in those days. She had jet black hair and her skin was ivory white, she had a dashing air, an Irish gaiety: everybody called her "Patsy." She had learned to draw under Vanderpoel in Chicago, and now she began to study with William Merritt Chase, who wore a monocle, and interspersed his lectures with anecdotes of Whistler and Sargent, and who could paint a codfish so glitteringly that the thing seemed actually to be scaly. She studied under Chase and F. Luis Mora for a year; she learned to dab on highlights and put purple in the shadows—and then, suddenly, she wasn't interested any more.

Everywhere, at that time, little groups of young artists had been losing interest likewise. Painting, they felt, had become nothing more than a pure technique of representation and so, to the consternation (and perhaps the secret envy) of their elders, they were rising in revolt, forming vociferous and impertinent schools—of Cubism, Futurism, Dynamism, Simultanéism, Dadaism—whose first rules were to have no rules at all.

O'Keeffe, however, knew nothing of this, and consequently, when she lost interest, she concluded that it must be herself, and not the system, that was to blame. The upshot was that in 1906 she decided she could never be a painter, and gave the whole thing up for good. As a matter of fact, it was

HE MAN WHO TOLD HIS FRIENDS HE WAS STAYING IN TOWN

almost ten years later that she took up her brushes again.

In the meantime, however, she had to earn a living, and drawing was the only trade she knew. She drifted about, doing the handy-man jobs of the arts. She worked in Chicago at various advertising agencies, she studied at Teachers College in New York, taught drawing in Virginia. Little record of these wandering years remains, save that she once startled some school board or other by advancing, apparently as her chief qualification for a teacher's position, that she "knew nothing whatever about art," and that she scandalized everybody in a sedate Virginia town by her practice of rising hours before dawn to take long solitary rambles over the countryside. She ended her peregrinations, as has been noted, at Amarillo, Texas; she had been teaching there a year when some strange impulse prompted her unaccountably to draw flowers, for once, as she really felt flowers ought to be drawn and (not daring to show them to anyone in Texas) to send the sketches off to New York. Flowers have been either the subject or the basis for abstract design in most of her paintings ever since.

ONE of the cruellest misconceptions ever perpetrated was that by which the modern painters came to be called "intellectual." Its implications still remain to confuse the layman and stultify the artist in spite of the fact that by now everyone should know that the only mental process involved in non-representational art is a negation, eliminating or otherwise nullifying the methods—of perspective, foreshortening, highlighting, and shadowing—by which the older painters tried to rationalize three dimensions out of two. With this exception, intellectually, the modern artist starts from scratch. O'Keeffe, however, has not been able to escape the inference on the part of critics that a great deal of deep thought goes into the formulation of her paintings. As a matter of fact, the reverse is more nearly true. Her years with the drawing-school classes have taught her the use of a clear, sharp line, and her own sincerity of vision uses that line as a knife-edge, cutting to the core of her emotional experience.

For the rest, she paints as she feels, impulsively. She does no underpainting on her canvases; she rarely even blocks out her design in advance. Sometimes, in the midst of an evening's conversation, she will be seen furtively sketching a few lines on a bit of paper or the back of an envelope; when she sets up her canvas, she begins at one corner and paints right across it, as one would write a letter.

Very often, however, she paints the same subject over and over again, until the final canvas satisfies her; it is in this way that most of her "abstractions" are developed. Thus with the famous "shingle-and-shell" series, painted some three years ago after a period of convalescence at her summer home on Lake George. While she lay abed, she had been playing with a clamshell someone had brought in from the beach; she added an old shingle whose weather-beaten color attracted her, and a leaf. When she was strong enough, she started to paint.

The first panel was sober and realistic. In the second, her interest had centred on the shell; it occupied more than half her space, while the leaf had diminished to a streak of green, and the shingle to a monotone of burnt sienna in the background. The third and last became a study of color-values, in which the outlines of the objects had been completely lost, in her effort to make the pigments themselves move and harmonize.

Sometimes, it might be said, this unordered approach to the subject flaws her abstract painting: such work, having no intellectual limitations, must obey an all the more strictly imposed emotional rule. But in her other pictures—in her flower paintings and her still-lifes—this same impulsive quality becomes her greatest charm. Here she focuses her entire canvas on a single petal or a single bud: it is as if she brought the flower nearer and nearer, as if she kept peering more and more closely, trying to find the secret of beauty there.

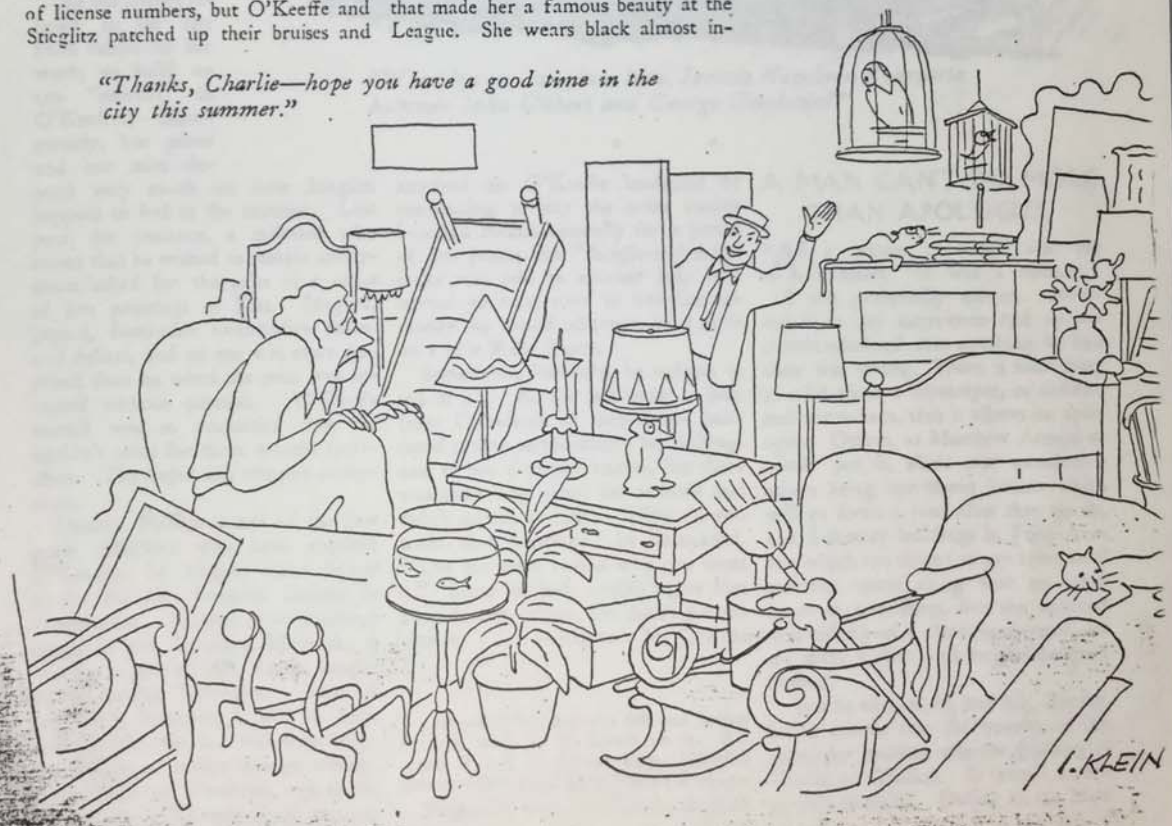
Most of us, sprawling out in a field in the country, have poked apart the grass-roots, fingered the soil, and studied with a kind of vague awe the minute life we found there. That mood, but sharper and clearer, is the mood that dominates all of O'Keeffe's best painting.

SHE was married, in December, 1924, to Alfred Stieglitz. They tried to do it quietly, planning to ferry over to New Jersey and get the business over with the least fuss possible, but the expedition turned out to be quite an event,

if not for their friends, at least for the Jersey police. John Marin, the water-colorist, met them at Weehawken with a new car he had just bought, and he proceeded to demonstrate his skill at the wheel by bouncing off a grocery wagon, caroming across the road, and demolishing one of New Jersey's most substantial electric-light poles. There were crowds, altercations, exchangings of license numbers, but O'Keeffe and Stieglitz patched up their bruises and went on to Cliffside, where the local hardware merchant, doubling as J. P., delivered them their marriage license.

They live now, in an atmosphere of good-natured asceticism, at the Hotel Shelton and at Lake George. O'Keeffe, in spite of many illnesses, is still a great walker. She retains at forty-two the pale profile and blue-black hair, the sense of inner vitality that made her a famous beauty at the League. She wears black almost invariably—not, she says, because she prefers it, but because, if she started picking out colors for dresses, she would have no time for painting. Last winter, however, she startled everybody by appearing at the exhibitions in a bright scarlet cloak. She is, in the sophistic sense, not a modern at all: she has never read Freud, doesn't like plays, wears long skirts and long hair, and

"Thanks, Charlie—hope you have a good time in the city this summer."



has never been to France. She is, however, an ardent feminist.

Her original agreement with Stieglitz still holds good: no one but he has ever exhibited her work, and her paintings are usually to be seen at the Intimate Gallery, which he conducts, in the Anderson Galleries Building. Her output is not tremendous: a complete catalogue of all her works would not number more than three hundred paintings; of these, about a hundred have been sold. Most of the others remain unsold chiefly because Stieglitz refuses to part with them.

He has always refused to set any fixed values for her work, to build up any "market" in O'Keeffes; consequently, her prices and her sales depend very much on how Stieglitz happens to feel at the moment. Last year, for instance, a collector who stated that he wished to remain anonymous asked for the price of a series of five paintings of lilies. Stieglitz, piqued, demanded twenty-five thousand dollars, and no one was more surprised than he when the price was accepted without question. O'Keeffe herself was so astounded that she couldn't paint for three months thereafter. The buyer still remains anonymous.

Duncan Phillips is one of the few great collectors who have acquired O'Keeffes: he bought three flower studies for his Memorial Gallery in Washington. Another of her paintings hangs in the Brooklyn Museum; it was the bequest of Mrs. Rossin, daughter of Adolph Lewisohn. Most of her work, however, is sold to more intimate admirers, and with these Stieglitz sometimes makes strange treaties. Thus, Maurice Wertheim, one of the sp[illegible]e Theatre Guild, recently acquired an O'Keeffe landscape by contracting to pay the artist twelve hundred dollars annually for a period of five years; the "shingle-and-shell" series was sold to another lady who agreed to turn over to Stieglitz the money she would otherwise have spent on a new Rolls-Royce.

Sometimes, however, he refuses to sell at all. At the last show, a lady from Cleveland or thereabouts indicated rather patronizingly her willingness to buy a certain canvas, but there was something about her attitude that didn't appeal to him. "Why do you want that painting?" he demanded. "Give me some reason why you want it." Since the lady couldn't give him a satisfactory reason, she didn't get the picture. —ROBERT M. COATES

"Whaddya say we place Mrs. Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte between John Gilbert and George Gershwin?"

•

LOST—Ladder, between 6th and Spring Streets, with J. E. Lynch on it. Reward if left at Lynch shop, 1121-6th Street.—*Medford (Ore.) Mail Tribune.*

Preferably with Mr. Lynch still on it.

A MAN CAN'T DO MORE THAN APOLOGIZE

"AS a matter of fact," said the architect, "it was a mistake."

I was profoundly moved. Never before in my experience had an architect admitted that anything he had done was wrong. There is something so solid about a skyscraper, so definite and permanent, that it allows no apologies. Others, as Matthew Arnold so wittily put it, abide our question—others being apartment houses which will go down a year after they go up, and five-story buildings in Fifth Avenue which are meant to pay taxes until someone comes along with an opera house or something. But the architect was talking of a skyscraper—and, let me make it clear, one he had designed himself.

Just to conceal its, and his, identity, let us assume that the novelty of this particular building was the grafting of Gothic on Grecian. It wasn't as bad as that, actually. Owing to the New

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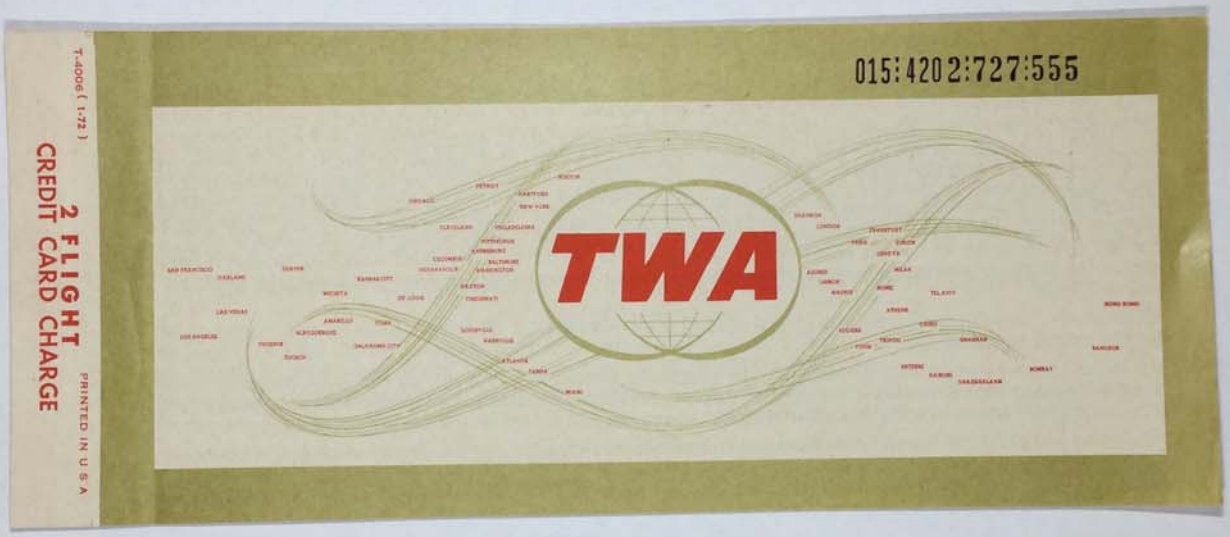

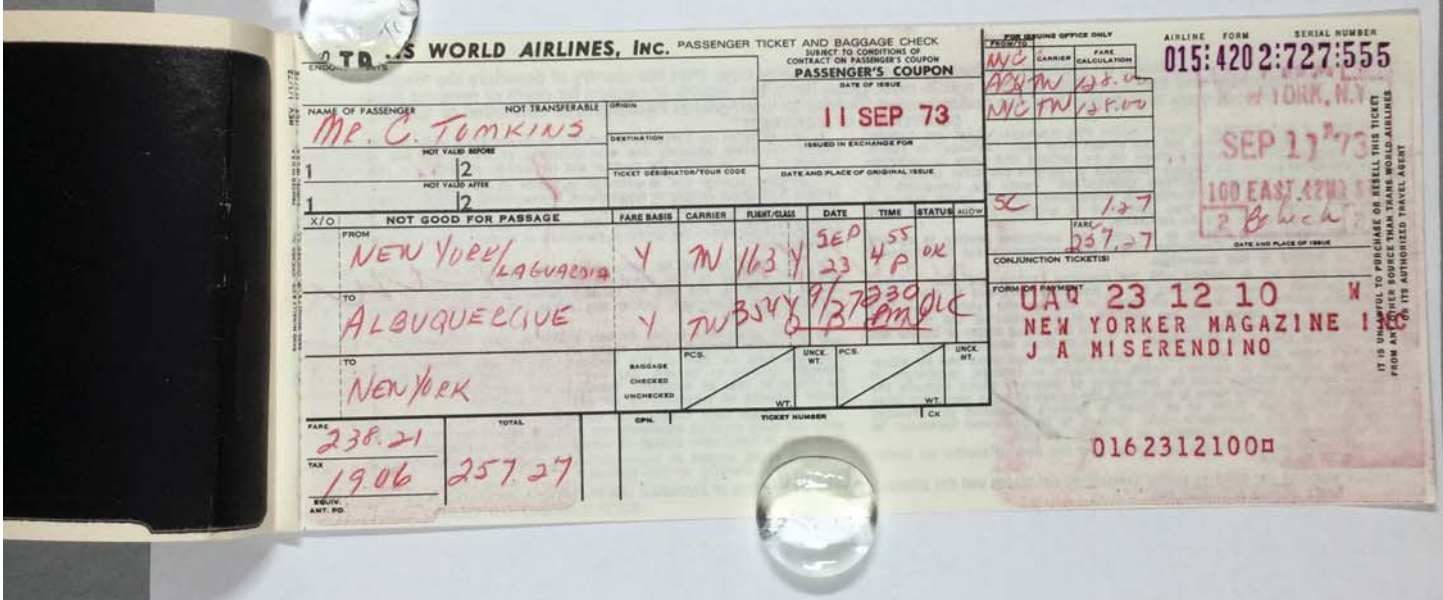

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Arts And Entertainment Thru The Looking Glass

By ANN MELIN

"I remember one morning I got up very early to catch a bus from Amarillo back to Canyon — I sat up in front with the driver, because the smell of whiskey and cigars in back was too awful — and we saw the most extraordinary sunrise. When we got to Canyon, I thought maybe that was something I could paint. It was really what started me painting again."

Georgia O'Keeffe in an interview for the *New Yorker*, March 4 issue

At 86, Georgia O'Keeffe is considered by many to be America's greatest living artist.

Reams have already been written about the woman and her work. Some writers have approached O'Keeffe through her art, attempting to understand the woman as revealed in her work. Others have made pilgrimages to one or the other of her homes in the village of Abiquiu, N.M. or on Ghost Ranch. A person of solitary persuasion, O'Keeffe admits some, rejects others.

Despite all that has been written about her, Georgia O'Keeffe remains a mystery. Her inscrutability is part of the reason why so many try to take it upon themselves to attempt the definitive article about the woman. To date, no one has succeeded.

When I first read about O'Keeffe four years ago and discovered that she was a former art department head at West Texas State University, I knew sooner or later something was going to have to be written about her in Canyon. By some perverse irony, the first and only woman to become American art history in her own time was a virtual nonentity in the region she herself has credited with being her inspiration to "paint again."

It would be my guess that the majority of Canyon residents have never heard of O'Keeffe. Those who by chance saw her picture on the cover of *Life* in 1968 or glanced, perhaps, at any of hundreds of articles about her in the nation's major publications, might hear her name and say, "Oh, yes, that's the old woman that paints the bones."

She does have a following of fans at West Texas State University. The current issue of the *New Yorker* which features a long article on O'Keeffe has currently been circulating among this circle and now lies on my desk.

latest O'Keeffe story is that for the first time, she speaks openly and directly of her experiences in the Amarillo-Canyon area. She does more than that. She says that this land — excoriated by so many outlanders for its barren, flat monotony — captured her own imagination to the extent of inspiring her to capture its ineffable beauty on canvas.

Perhaps the reason O'Keeffe's work is considered "unorthodox" by so many lies in the fact that the woman had to search for a different aesthetic of beauty to govern her painting. In every sense, O'Keeffe has been a lone wolf in the art world. From the beginning, she seems to have been intoxicated with the beauty of the very things about the Southwest that have repelled countless others.

O'Keeffe first discovered the cattle bones that have become her trademark when she was living in the Amarillo-Canyon area. In the *New Yorker* article, she describes the same scene described by Canyon's oldest living resident, Joe Black, in an interview with the man which appeared recently in the *News*. O'Keeffe, like Black, recalled the days when "you could see the cattle coming in across the range for days at a time."

For some reason it was not the rugged Panhandle cattleman or his ocean of white-faced cattle that compelled O'Keeffe's imagination. Looking for an essential part of the land to take back with her when she returned to the East, she chose the bleached cattle bones that populated the plains at the time. O'Keeffe saw something in the bones that old Panhandle ranchers may never have noticed themselves, but might understand better than most of O'Keefe's fans when she explains it in a *Life* article:

"To me they (the skulls) are as beautiful as anything I know. To me they are strangely more living than the animals walking around — hair, eyes and all, with their tails switching. The bones seem to cut sharply to the center of something that is keenly alive on the desert even though it is vast and empty and untouchable — and knows no kindness with all its beauty."

So little-known is O'Keeffe and her work in the Canyon area that when one happens on someone in the city who knows of her, it's because they KNOW her.

Mrs. T.V. Reaves, a long-time resident in the community, knows Georgia O'Keeffe. They

Reeves said she didn't know how or why O'Keeffe came to leave her home in the kinder, wheat-farming country of southern Wisconsin to come to the Texas plains. But O'Keeffe came here and all who knew her in those early days tell of the woman's strange fascination with the land.

Mrs. Reeves recalls a particular day when she, her husband and O'Keeffe were climbing up a craggy cliff in the Palo Duro Canyon. O'Keeffe was trailing behind the Reeves when suddenly she let out a terrific whoop. "We were scared to death. We thought she was falling," Mrs. Reeves remembered. O'Keeffe quashed their fears when she exclaimed, "I can't help it — it's all so beautiful!"

In a community as staid as Canyon was in the World War I era, Georgia O'Keeffe must have been considered something of a bohemian. She apparently came to the bustling little cow town for different reasons than most who settled here.

One of seven children, O'Keeffe was born on a Wisconsin farm, later moving to Virginia. She studied art in Chicago and New York and came to West Texas Normal College to teach only after being fired by the innovating art concepts of one of her own instructors, Arthur Dow.

From 1913 to 1916, O'Keeffe served as supervisor of arts in the Amarillo Public Schools. She later joined the faculty at West Texas, serving as art department head from 1916-1918.

While in Canyon, she roomed at the home of Mrs. D.A. Shirley. Asked for her recollections of O'Keeffe, Mrs. Shirley was loathe to give them.

"She wouldn't like for me to talk about her. She was a private person. I let her talk to me whenever she wanted to talk to me. The rest of the time I didn't bother her. . . I just know she'd hate the idea of a story being written about her."

Mrs. Reeves seemed to hold the same opinion of O'Keeffe — that her artist-friend hates publicity and to speak freely about their relationship would somehow be a grievous breach of friendship. The Canyon woman has received several letters recently from all over the United States. Art historians, graduate students and others are asking Mrs. Reeves for information regarding O'Keeffe's Canyon years.

Puzzled and rather bewildered by the reluctance of the Canyon women to talk of their famous

What brought me back to the source was the recent interview with O'Keeffe in the *New Yorker*. I was struck by her statement about the bus ride from Amarillo to Canyon and how she regarded it as a threshold in her life.

As one of hundreds of Amarilloans who have made the daily ride from Amarillo to Canyon, I was amazed to find that I shared this experience with the world's most famous woman artist. I was amazed to discover that all who have ever made the trip from Amarillo to Canyon have shared this experience with O'Keeffe.

The only difference is that the Amarillo-Canyon commuter knows what lies between the two towns. Georgia O'Keefe saw what lies between them. WTSU Artist-in-residence John Pellew clarified this when he told students that a "primitive artist paints something because he *knows* it is there. A professional artist paints what he *sees* to be there." O'Keeffe, the consummate artist, paints what she sees.

The entire time she resided in the Panhandle, O'Keeffe must have been regarded by the townspeople as an outsider. According to Mrs. Reeves, the artist always wore black frocks with immaculate white collars. On the out-of-town excursions that she loved so much, O'Keeffe would don tweeds, Mrs. Reeves said. Canyon City probably seemed very backward to one who was accustomed to running in the sophisticated art circles of the East. O'Keeffe thirsted for news from the "outside world." Mrs. Reeves says she recalls coming home to find the young O'Keeffe sprawled on her living room floor, surrounded by newspapers and magazines, taking it all in.

There is a good deal of controversy about how O'Keeffe came to leave Canyon. Some say the artists' opposition to World War I, an opposition she may have revealed to her students, may have put her in the red with university officials and townsfolk. One of her Canyon friends vehemently denies allegations of her possible dismissal from WTSU, however, calling the rumor a "dirty lie." The Canyon woman stated flatly that "Georgia quit her job because of illness."

The *New Yorker* interview with O'Keeffe seems to be the only story written to date in which the artist goes into any detail about her Canyon years. Like her Canyon friends, she has tended to be silent about those years.

It might seem a ludicrous claim

laughter. The women looked tired and fatigued. One of the children burst suddenly into tears, as children will often do. I looked at the child and said in my rotten Spanish "No llores, chiquita." Maybe that wasn't correct Spanish, but the message got through to the child. She ceased crying and beamed like a tiny angel. Bolstered by my success with the child, I attempted my academic Spanish on the mother. "Adonde va, Senora?" I asked. The woman looked at me, a bit puzzled. She told me she was going to Hereford to visit her father. I gathered her father was a migrant laborer. I asked where she was from. She was from Dallas. "Then you must be very tired," I said. She smiled and said "Yes, what with the children and all." I told her her children seemed very happy. She looked at the little ones and just smiled.

The Chicanos were to leave on the same bus as me. I noticed a young black woman watching us during this entire interlude. When the bus pulled up to the station, she approached me and asked where I was going. I told her I was going to work. She told me she was going to Ruidoso to pick up her two-year-old child whom she missed very much. She, too, was from Amarillo and would be returning to the city the same day. We decided we'd sit together and find out how we both had been spending our lives in the same city. We were talking away when a young man passed down the aisle. I caught a glimpse of the *New York Times* he was carrying and asked if I might look and see what the news from NYC was today. He said he'd just left NYC a couple of days ago, and he could tell me how it was. "Just like it's always been," he said. He was a student at Eastern New Mexico University at Portales. He was a Long Islander, going to school in the Southwest because he said it was cheaper. I told him my father was from Brooklyn and took a degree from Eastern New Mexico University, just as this boy was planning to do, only for different reasons.

The bus pulled away from the station. The Long Island boy was seated at my right, across the aisle. The black girl was to my left. The Chicanos were seated directly behind me, the children climbing all over the seats.

At this time, I held up the *Life* magazine with your picture on the front. I told the people that you were a world famous artist and that right here in the *New Yorker* magazine you said that the very same trip we were making to Canyon once may have inspired you to paint. I opened the magazine and read your words to the people on the bus. I told them a lot of people didn't think the Panhandle was anything but ugly, but that there must be something of beauty in it if it could have sparked such emotion in America's greatest woman artist.

The bus rolled down the expressway, past the Amarillo city limits and onto the open road. We were engulfed in all that infinity of blue sky and rolling plains.

After I read your words, the people on the bus looked out their windows, almost as if performing some kind of religious service. (I mean there was something close to reverence in their faces).

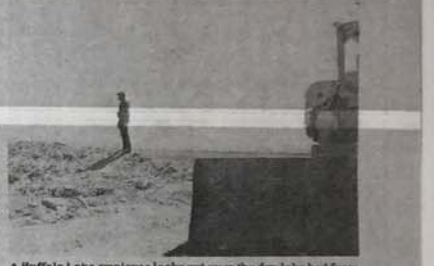
Maybe I'm stretching things a bit, but I've decided that what happened among these people on this bus was something akin to what you felt when you saw the sunrise between Amarillo and Canyon. It was an act of *SEEING*.

Respectfully,
Ann Melin

Pink, Blue Shower Honors Mrs. Carlisle

A Pink and Blue Shower was given in honor of Mrs. Buttons Carlisle, a resident of Hobbs, N.M., and former Canyon resident, Saturday, March 16th from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Palo Duro Club, in the home of E.E. O'Donald. Hostesses for the occasion were Mrs. Gentry Lynn, Mrs. Hugh Greiner, and Mrs. Otto Samuelson.

Refreshments of lime punch, coffee and cake squares decorated appropriately for the glad event were served to the following guests: Mrs. Cecil O'Donald and Jeanie, Mrs. J. D. Breitling, Mrs. Robert O'Donald and Mrs. Dan O'Donald, all of Canyon; Mrs. Ruth Ridley of Belliview, N.M., Mrs. Kathryn Cavanaugh, Mrs. Herbert Breitling, Mrs. Kay Culwell and Katrina, and Mrs. Tom Carlisle of Amarillo, Mrs. Dwight Carter and Mrs. James Shannon of Plainview, and Mrs. Charles Andrus, Mrs. Gerald Schulte, Mrs. Glen Amburn, Mrs. Happy Cole, Miss Sharon Whitehead and Mrs. Eston Breitling of Tulia.



A Buffalo Lake employee looks out over the dry lake bed from atop the dike which is being constructed to bisect the lake. The dike will contain water at the south end of the lake so water will be available for ducks and geese. The dike, when finished, should be between 8 and 12 feet in height.

Artists' Studio Show Set

The Artist's Studio of Amarillo will hold their annual Spring Art Show on Saturday, April 6 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Sunset Center in Amarillo.

Participation is limited to members of the Artist's Studio. Works of art to be displayed include oils, pastels, graphics, watercolors, and acrylics in a varied price range. The show will be restricted to fine arts. No crafts will be exhibited.

Member artists interested in exhibiting their works should contact the exhibit chairman, Mrs. Margaret Fletcher in Canyon at 655-9874 for information regarding reservations for space. A fee of $2 will be charged for each entrant.

The work of three Amarillo artists will be featured at the show. The artists are Iva McWilliams, Linda Pool and Don Huggins.

would come straight from her.

I told Mrs. Reeves of the letter I sent to O'Keeffe and she said simply, "She won't answer it." Mrs. Reeves was correct in her prediction until this week.

Perhaps out of compassion, Mrs. Reeves told me there was one thing she did remember about O'Keeffe that she would be willing to tell me if I'd come over to her house one afternoon. I detected urgency in her voice, so I dropped everything and went.

Mrs. Reeves told me that she did remember O'Keeffe telling her that it was the years spent in the Texas Panhandle which influenced her to eventually move to New Mexico. She also told me of the day in the Palo Duro when the young O'Keeffe yelped with joy at the beauty of the Canyon.

The mystery of O'Keeffe lies in the question of why her Canyon years influenced her to live in New Mexico, not Canyon.

O'Keeffe herself once indicated a desire to live in this region. In an interview with the artist which appeared in a New Mexico magazine O'Keeffe said that "sometimes when the plane flies over Texas, and I see those plains below, I think I want to get off right there — and stay!"

But she has not returned to the Texas plains. Perhaps she never will. At this time, she lives in stark simplicity, dividing her time between an adobe home in Abiquiu, N.M. and a desert ranch to the north. Reading of her austere life style, I've often wondered about the reasons for her self-imposed exile, if that indeed is what it is.

Four years ago I decided a story needed to be written here about Georgia O'Keeffe. A few months ago when my letter to her went unanswered, I determined that I was not going to be the one to have to write that story. After getting so close to what I believed to be some basic answers to the enigma of the woman, I backed off in fear.

to paint. Quantitatively, two years seem like a drop in the bucket. But in qualitative terms, O'Keeffe's stay here must have had an incalculable effect on her life.

O'Keeffe's relationship with the Panhandle terrain was and is as intimate as that of the most wind-beaten old rancher in Byrd's Recreation Club. But how alien O'Keeffe must have seemed to that rancher 58 years ago, what with her funny notions about art and life! And how alien that rancher must have seemed to O'Keeffe, with his dirty cigars and brusque ways.

She left Texas and became a famous painter. Maybe she saw it as "destiny." She could never be a part of the Canyon community because she couldn't accept the people and they probably wouldn't have accepted her. Unable to "know" the Panhandle, she contented herself with "seeing" it as an artist.

By coincidence, I had an occasion recently to take the same morning bus ride that O'Keeffe took over 50 years ago — the bus ride that changed the course of her life. When I got to the office, I wrote O'Keeffe yet another letter, telling her of the experience:

Dear Miss O'Keeffe,

I usually hitch a ride with a girlfriend to come to Canyon in the morning, but today she didn't come. I took the bus. I arrived at the station carrying a copy of the 1968 *Life* magazine article about you, a copy of this month's issue of the *New Yorker*, and a sheaf of blank paper on which I was to have written a story about you last night, but never got around to it.

I thought the bus was to leave at 8:10 a.m., but I was mistaken. The next bus to Canyon was not leaving until 9:45 a.m. All I could do was wait. A young girl in blue jeans smiled at me and I smiled back. She asked where I was headed and I told her I was just going to work. I asked where she was headed and she said she was going to Colorado. She got to talking to me about love and life and friendship and happiness. She missed her bus. She said it was OK, though, because she'd take a bus to Utah at 8:45 p.m. I told her to come to work with me and bide her time until evening. She agreed. But while we were waiting for my bus to Canyon to arrive, another bus came that was leaving for New York. She just figured she'd go to New York. I told her not to forget me. She said "I won't forget."

After her bus pulled out of the station, I opened the *New Yorker* to read the story about you over again. Seated behind me were two Chicano women and three very small children. The children were filled with energy and

Jim Christopher

Jim Christopher

Candidate For City Commissioner, Place 3

Answers Your Questions

- **Why do I seek reelection for this office?** "My answer is that I feel that each citizen has an obligation to participate in his community's activities. It is my belief that I can best serve my community in this manner."
- **Why do I think the city needs a new city hall, library, police station and fire station?** "The existing facilities are simply no longer adequate for a growing, thriving community such as ours. They are crowded, outdated, inconvenient for the public and expensive to maintain. The citizens of Canyon (present and future) certainly deserve better facilities while funding is available."
- **What about a public vote on such an important issue?** "Your city commission has never said they didn't want this issue to come to a vote. This decision has not been made at this time because we do not know the cost or have the final details to work with. I do feel that it is an urgent matter because we all know building costs are going up each day."
- **Can we afford an expenditure of such a large amount of money?** "Not only can we afford it, but it appears that if we are ever going to build such a facility, the timing is right for now! Federal revenue sharing funds are available for the first time in history. Through careful management of the city's monetary affairs, we now have in excess of $800,000 available for use on this project . . . and this is without sacrificing any of the present city functions or raising taxes!"
- **I'd like to encourage everybody to vote on Tuesday, April 2. If I am elected, I am willing to work for you, all the citizens of Canyon, for the next two years . . . Building Canyon!**

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