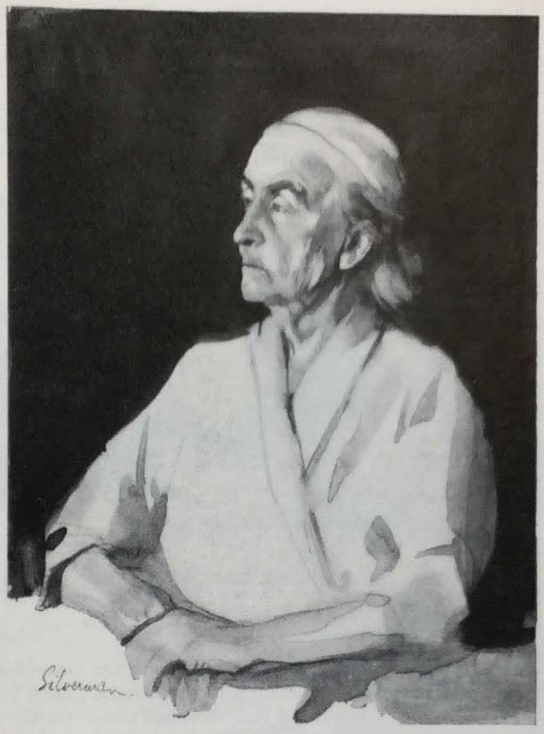
PROFILES

THE ROSE IN THE EYE LOOKED PRETTY FINE



Georgia O'Keeffe

FROM THE FARAWAY NEARBY. 1937. Oil on canvas.—Bleached-white antlers branching from the dark skull fill most of the picture space. A range of low hills occupy what would be the foreground except that they are drawn in distant perspective—a faraway desert landscape over which the deer's skull presides neither symbolically nor realistically, an image not susceptible to interpretation, an O'Keeffe. Years ago, she said she had no theories to offer. Her painting, she said, was "like a thread that runs through all the reasons for all the other things that make one's life."

Georgia O'Keeffe, who is eighty-six, spends almost no time thinking about the past. "You'd push the past out of your way entirely if you only could," she said to me one morning last fall, sitting in the open patio of her house near the Ghost Ranch, in the New Mexican high desert, seventy miles northwest of Santa Fe. What interested her at the moment were the wild purple asters that grow so abundantly at this time of the year, when there has been enough rain. It was largely because of the purple asters that after lunch she asked Juan Hamilton, her young friend and assistant, to take us to the Monastery of Christ in the Desert, a seventeen-mile trip over barely navigable dirt roads. Although the asters at the monastery were less plentiful than she had remembered them, she spent a pleasant hour chatting with the Benedictine monks and admiring the chapel, built in 1965 by George Nakashima and furnished as austerely as her own house, with split-log benches, wood carvings by a local artist, and a gory wooden crucifix in the Spanish manner. Miss O'Keeffe had visited the monastery several times, most recently for the dawn service last Easter, and the monks were pleased to see her. On the drive back, bouncing imperturbably in the rear seat of her Volkswagen bus, she said that it would be a very simple thing for her to convert someone to Catholicism. "It has great appeal," she said. "Not for me, of course—but I can see the appeal."

Her voice is quiet and yet clearly audible. She was dressed entirely in white—a white jacket of some durable material, a full skirt of the same stuff, white shoes. Jerrie Newsom, the woman who takes care of her and, in Miss O'Keeffe's words, "keeps me alive," told me that when people ask whether Miss O'Keeffe has only one dress, she explains that "Miss O'Keeffe has a hundred dresses, but they're all alike, except that some are black instead of white." The dress suits her, in any case. A slight, immaculate woman with white hair tied back in a smooth knot, she is as handsome today as she was at twenty-nine, when Alfred Stieglitz began his famous multiple portrait of her, now in the National Gallery, in Washington—a portrait that eventually included some five hundred photographs.

During the drive back from the monastery, she told me how she had discovered the Ghost Ranch. "I'd been staying down around Alcalde, east of here, for several summers in the nineteen-thirties. One day, the boy who was trying to teach me to drive said he knew of a place he thought I'd like better than any I'd seen, and he brought me up here. It was operating as a dude ranch then. Before that, it had been a working ranch. I think the story is that a family was murdered there, and that from time to time a woman carrying a child appears in the original house—that's the ghost. Well, I came back a few days later, alone, and asked if I could stay. The owners said that I could stay the night but that unless some other guest failed to show up I'd have to leave in the morning. That night, a family moved out—the son had developed appendicitis—and I moved in. That was in 1934, and I've been coming up here on the plateau every summer since then. I knew the minute I got up here that this was where I would live." She bought her own house, which is about two miles from the ranch, in 1940. Some years ago, the Ghost Ranch was acquired by the Presbyterian Church, which now uses it as a conference center. Miss O'Keeffe has given the Presbyterians a sufficiently wide berth. "You know about the Indian eye that passes over you without lingering, as though you didn't exist?" she said. "That was the way I used to look at the Presbyterians at the ranch, so they wouldn't become too friendly."

Although she owns a larger and more comfortable house in the village of Abiquiu, sixteen miles south of the ranch, Miss O'Keeffe has always felt more at home up on the plateau. The solitude, the stillness, and the harsh, dry, splendid landscape are more her world. Animal skulls and bleached antlers hang on the walls of her patio, and rocks picked up on her walks and camping trips spill in profusion over low tables and shelves. A few years ago, when Miss O'Keeffe and several others were going down the Colorado River—a week in a pontoon boat, sleeping under the stars every night—her friend Eliot Porter, the photographer, found a particularly beautiful stone, which Miss O'Keeffe very much wanted for her collection. Porter said he was keeping it for his wife. Matters were a trifle touchy for a time, but then, a few

weeks later, the Porters came to Miss O'Keeffe's house for dinner and presented her with the stone. "When she wants something, she makes people give it to her," Stieglitz once remarked. "They feel she is fine and has something other people have not." Not that she wants many possessions. "I like to have things as sparse as possible," she told me. "If you have an empty wall, you can think on it better. I like a space to think in—if you can call what I do thinking."

Miss O'Keeffe sometimes feels that she ought to sell the Abiquiu house and live permanently at the ranch. "Last year, Jerrie and I were here into December," she said. "Being up here is one of the best things I know. There is nothing in this house that I can get along without."

LIGHT COMING ON THE PLAINS, NO. II. 1917. Watercolor.—An impression of endless dark space under a vault of sky. A narrow, ragged beam of white near the bottom suggests the horizon, but not specifically; in O'Keeffe's work, nature is not so much analyzed as meditated upon, the result being an abstraction that does not look abstract. When she painted "Light," O'Keeffe was living on the wide, windswept plains of north Texas, teaching school. "That was my country," she wrote in 1919. "Terrible winds and a wonderful emptiness."

There is little to indicate why O'Keeffe should have felt at home in such a landscape. She was born and brought up in the gentler, wheat-farming country of southern Wisconsin, the second of seven children in a moderately well-to-do family. "My mother's and my father's families had farms that adjoined, and eventually my father bought my mother's property," she told me. "They raised all kinds of things there, even tobacco. I can still see the enormous loads of hay coming into the barns in the evening—I've never seen loads of hay like that anywhere else." On rainy days, their mother used to read aloud to her older brother, who had weak eyes. O'Keeffe always listened, even after she had learned how to read herself. Her favorites were stories about the Old West. "My memories of childhood are quite pleasant," she said to me, "although I hated school." Until she was twelve, she went to a small rural school near her home. For a while, she and two of her sisters also went into the town of Sun Prairie once a week for private lessons in drawing and painting. Today, she says she can't remember a time when she couldn't read music (although she doesn't remember taking music lessons), and it has sometimes seemed to her that she might have become a musician. The family was not a terribly close one, and she rarely played with her brothers or sisters. One day when she was ten, she told her friend Lena, the daughter of the woman who did the family's washing, that she was going to be an artist. "I have no idea where that came from," she said. "I just remember saying it."

Because the harsh Wisconsin winters seemed to be undermining Mr. O'Keeffe's health, the family moved in 1902 to Williamsburg, Virginia. Georgia was sent away to boarding school at the Chatham Episcopal Institute—Chatham Hall today—where she was far from a model student. "I'd go for long walks in the woods, which wasn't allowed. I wouldn't read my French lesson aloud to myself three times, as we were told to do, and in class when the teacher asked whether I had done it I would say no—that I didn't have the time for that. I always had enough demerits to be expelled if I got one more. And I never did learn to spell. My friend Doris Bry says now that I've ruined her spelling because I misspell with such confidence."

She was going to be an artist. After graduating from Chatham, she entered the Art Institute of Chicago, but a serious bout with typhoid the following spring caused her to withdraw, and she spent a long convalescence at home. In 1907, she enrolled in the Art Students League, in New York, where she won a prize for a still-life painting and a scholarship to the League's summer school at Lake George. O'Keeffe remembers that at the League she was everybody's pet. Her hair, which had only just started to grow in after her illness, was short and curly—a rare phenomenon at the time. Any number

"Sure you're a loser. But you're a darn good loser."

of fellow-students wanted to paint O'Keeffe, whose strong, clean features and intensely expressive hands and eyes would so fascinate Stieglitz a few years later. She disliked posing, and has occasionally said that her unwillingness to put others through such an ordeal ruled out any interest she might have taken in painting the human face or body. There was never any question about her talent. But the slick, academic imitations of European styles then being taught at the League by William M. Chase, Kenyon Cox, and others soon lost all interest for her. "I began to realize that a lot of people had done this same kind of painting before I came along," she told the art historian Katharine Kuh in 1962. "It had been done, and I didn't think I could do it any better." O'Keeffe decided to give up painting, and for the next four years she did not paint. Instead, she went to Chicago and became a commercial designer, drawing lace and embroidery for advertisements. In the summer of 1912, however, home on a visit to her family, who had moved from Williamsburg to Charlottesville, she was persuaded by one of her sisters to register for Alon Bement's summer art class at the University of Virginia. Bement was a disciple of Arthur Wesley Dow, the head of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Columbia University's Teachers College. A brilliant art educator, Dow had known and worked with Gauguin in France; he was also a friend of Ernest F. Fenollosa, the great Orientalist, through whom he had developed a profound appreciation of Chinese and Japanese painting. As O'Keeffe said after studying with Dow himself, "This man had one dominating idea: to fill a space in a beautiful way." Bement taught according to Dow's principles of design, which for O'Keeffe proved eventually to be a way out of the dead end of academic realism. Bement invited her to come back the following summer—and for the three summers after that—to teach with him at the University of Virginia, and at Bement's urging she went to New York in 1914 to study with Dow. Until then, she had been earning her living as an art supervisor in the public schools of north Texas.

"It came about because of a girl I had known at Chatham Institute," O'Keeffe told me. "The girls there all thought I was pretty strange, and I thought they were pretty strange, mainly because we spoke so differently. There was one girl named Alice Beretta, from Laredo, Texas, who hated me—or so I was told. Well, when I heard that, I bet some of the others that I could get her to like me, and I went to work on Alice. After we left Chatham, we corresponded. She began teaching school in Amarillo, and when the art teacher there left, she suggested that they hire me, and they did. I was hugely excited about going to Texas, because of all those stories that Mother had read to us. Texas was the great place in the world as far as I was concerned.

"I got very interested in teaching," O'Keeffe went on. "Later, I became head of the art department of the normal school in Canyon, about twenty miles away. What I enjoyed was teaching people who had no interest in becoming artists. Dow's teaching had been based on the idea that the same principles applied no matter what sort of work you were doing—pottery, making wallets, anything. He thought everybody had to use these principles in everything he did. Dow gave us exercises in the arrangement of color and shape, dark and light, smooth and rough, and so forth. One of his exercises was to take a maple leaf and fit it into a seven-inch square in various ways. Of course, when I got to north Texas there was nothing like a leaf to use. The only tree around was the locust, and its leaves were too small to do anything with. There was just nothing for the children to use, and they were too poor to go out and buy an orange. I'd get them to draw a square and put a door in it somewhere—anything to start them thinking about how to divide a space. Pretty soon, I got so interested in teaching I wondered why I should be paid for it.

"And then, of course, I liked everything about Texas. I didn't even mind the dust, although sometimes when I came back from a walk I'd be the color of the road. Oh, the sun was hot and the wind was hard and you got cold in the winter—I was just crazy about all of it. 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. I worked in watercolor, because I never had the time for oils."

Although much of the new work looked wholly abstract, it was always based on something she had seen in the landscape. The "Light Coming on the Plains" series had its origin in what she often saw in the very early morning, before the sun rose. "The light would begin to appear, and then it would disappear and there would be a kind of halo effect, and then it would appear again. The light would come and go for quite a while before it finally came. It was the same with the trains. You could see the morning train coming a

SPRING TRAINS

In spring one notices the trains more,
in their unaging childhood:
the rust-red boxcars, the blue-black coal scuttles on wheels,
stopped a long time, then imperceptibly moving
through the new green lash
of the willows. . . .

I think they will go by the windows of lonely peaked houses
where someone smudged and beautiful
draws one hair back over the seashell of her ear;
and I think they go to the night I once woke to,
dark peaks swinging from side to side of the sky,
and the rapids beneath, shades paler than the snow,
while the Mormon evangelist wheezed in the next chair;
and sometimes I think they go to a secret mountain
in the center of West Virginia
made of coal so black it is everywhere a mirror,
and you never know the moment of passing through.

—Alan Williamson

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"Charisse, are we too sophisticated to order some Girl Scout cookies?"

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long way off, and then it would disappear, and then you'd see it again, closer. The country was so flat, but there were slight depressions in it, and things would drop out of sight. Anyway, my teaching schedule was usually arranged so that I had two hours a day to myself, and that's when I used to paint. It was a good time for me. I was getting very interested in what was mine."

RADIATOR BUILDING—NIGHT, NEW YORK. 1927. Oil on canvas.—A tall black office building with a brilliantly illuminated tower and patterns of dark and lighted windows, part of the precise nighttime geometry of Manhattan. Colors as intense as neon. On the left, on top of another building, a big electric sign spells out the words "ALFRED STIEGLITZ."

They met for the first time in 1916. O'Keeffe, of course, had often visited the Stieglitz gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue, had seen her first Matisses and Picassos there, and had certainly overheard Stieglitz talking to other visitors in his volcanic style, preaching the cause of modernism and upholding the artist's integrity against the multiple corruptions of the age. But they did not actually meet until the spring of 1916, when O'Keeffe, learning that Stieglitz had hung a group of her recent drawings in his gallery without her knowledge or permission, came to make him take them down. Stieglitz was not even there the first time she appeared—he was on jury duty. She returned a day or so later and confronted him indignantly. O'Keeffe, who has grown exceedingly tired of this story over the years, will say only that he managed to talk her out of removing the drawings. "He was a good talker" is the way she puts it.

The drawings, which came before the first Texas watercolors, were the earliest fruits of her decision, in 1915, that everything she had painted up until then was influenced by one or another of her teachers, and that from then on she would paint only what was in her head. "I hadn't thought before about doing what was in my head," she told me. "I hadn't even known anything was there. But when I began to think about it, it seemed very simple." The series of charcoal drawings that she did soon after this decision were for the most part abstractions based on forms in nature. O'Keeffe sent a group of the drawings to her friend Anita Pollitzer, in New York, but asked her to show them to no one else. O'Keeffe had met Miss Pollitzer in Arthur Dow's course at Columbia. She was currently the secretary of the New York branch of the National Woman's Party—"a very lively little person," in O'Keeffe's description, "who used to carry everything under one arm—books, sketch pad, notes, brush and comb—and who usually had some paint on her face or in her very long hair." Miss Pollitzer took the drawings straight to Stieglitz, who looked at them and made his

famous remark "Finally, a woman on paper." He kept them for several months, and then exhibited them the following spring, along with work by Charles Duncan and René Lafferty.

A year after that first meeting, Stieglitz gave her a one-man show—her first—at 291. O'Keeffe was in Texas at the time, teaching, but when she heard that her show would be the last ever held at 291—the building was to be torn down—she took all her money out of the bank and came East to see it. The show had been dismantled before she arrived, but Stieglitz rehung it for her. Before she went back to Texas, he also photographed her for the first time. The following spring, Stieglitz offered to pay her living expenses for one year, so that she could devote herself entirely to painting, and that summer O'Keeffe resigned from teaching and came to New York to live. She became a member of Stieglitz's inner circle, which included the painters John Marin, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, and, later on, Charles Demuth and the photographer Paul Strand. "I met a *great* many people," O'Keeffe said, recalling those days. "There was Stieglitz's circle, and there was also the circle around the Stettheimer sisters—Florine, the painter, and Ettie, the writer, and Carrie, who built the doll house that they and their friends decorated. Whenever Florine finished a painting, she would invite everybody in for tea. Nothing in her house looked as though it had ever been used. Once, I made this comment about a red cushion, and Florine said very indignantly, 'I sit on it every *day*!'

Another time, I remember, I was sitting there just behind the new painting, and Marcel Duchamp was in a chair facing me. I finished my tea, and Duchamp got up from his chair and took my teacup from me with the most extraordinary grace—with a gesture so elegant that I've never forgotten it.

"Demuth was very elegant, too. He was also more amusing than any of the other artists I knew. He had diabetes, and he would come to New York from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he lived in a house that had been in his family since the seventeen-hundreds, and would eat and drink everything he wasn't allowed to eat and drink, and get quite sick. In my memory, he is the only artist who was any fun to be with. We were always going to do a large picture together—a flower painting—but we never did. He had a clubfoot, and the effort of walking must have been terrible for him—his collar wilted even on the coldest days. The first time we met him, he was ill and very thin, and his ears stuck out from his head like horns. He always had lunch or dinner with Stieglitz and me when he came to town, and we always enjoyed it."

When Stieglitz and O'Keeffe began their life together, in 1918, she was thirty and he was fifty-five. He had been married; she had not. In addition to being the greatest living photographer—the man who had managed almost singlehanded to revolutionize the medium and to force its recognition as a legitimate means of producing art—he was the center of the modern-art movement in America. He often described his exhibition galleries—first 291 and later the Intimate Gallery and An American Place—as laboratories for experiment rather than places where pictures were sold, and not infrequently he refused to sell to people whose motives he mistrusted. "Stieglitz liked the idea of a group," O'Keeffe said. "He wanted something to come out of America—something really important—and he felt that you couldn't do that alone." O'Keeffe, for her part, did not like groups and was never comfortable in them. For almost thirty years,

she lived without complaint the kind of life that Stieglitz's public role demanded. (They were married in 1924.) "I never knew how many there would be for dinner," she said. "It seemed as though anyone who was around the gallery in the late afternoon would come back afterward." During those years, living on the thirtieth floor of the Shelton Hotel and later in an apartment near the East River on Fifty-fourth Street, she managed, in spite of interruptions, to get a considerable amount of painting done. In the summer, they went to Lake George, where the large and somewhat contentious Stieglitz clan came together in a house filled with Victorian furniture and knickknacks. "There would be from fifteen to twenty people at the table, and four times as much food as anyone could eat," O'Keeffe recalls. "It was hard for me to work there, because I can never bear to have people around me when I'm working, or to let anybody see what I'm doing or say anything about it until it's finished. Stieglitz never could understand that. Stieglitz did almost all his own photographic work in the summer. In the winter, people were his work."

Dozens of the people Stieglitz knew and influenced have tried to write their impressions of him, but O'Keeffe feels that no one has come close to describing him accurately. "Stieglitz was a very contradictory person," she said last fall. "For example, he would start out in the morning saying one thing, and by noon he would be saying the exact opposite, and then in the evening he would have changed his mind again. He thought aloud, you see. He could become very enthusiastic about someone's work and then forget about it. But he said everything with such conviction that people always believed him. He had such power with words. Stieglitz used words in a unique, almost violent way, which nobody has ever been able to reproduce. It was appalling to me the way he could tear somebody to pieces—and that person would accept it because it was Stieglitz talking.

"His mind was quicker than mine, of course, but when I really knew I was right I could often wear him down. I seldom argued with him, though. He was the sort of person who could be destroyed completely if you disagreed with him. Actually, for someone who moved in the world as widely as he did, Stieglitz was something of a child. You had to humor him a good deal. When I was first with him, his breakfast every morning would be exactly six pieces of zwieback and a cup of cocoa made with water—and that would be all he had until six in the evening. There had always been too much food at his family's; I think he reacted against that by never eating enough.

"The relationship that Stieglitz and I had was really very good, because it was built on something more than just emotional needs. Each of us was really interested in what the other was doing. I think what he did in photography was one of the great documents of the period. Of course, you do your best to destroy each other without knowing it—some people do it knowingly and some do it unknowingly. But if you have a real basis, as we did, you can get along pretty well despite the differences."

In a letter to the *Sun's* art critic, Henry McBride, during the nineteen-twenties, O'Keeffe described her own "particular kind of vanity." She did not in the least mind being ignored, she wrote, "but I don't like to be second or third or fourth," and added, "I like being first, if I'm noticed at all. That's why I get on with Stieglitz. With him, I feel first. And when he is around, and there are others, he is the center and I don't count at all." And some years later, again to McBride: "I see Alfred as an old man that I am very fond of—growing older—so that it sometimes shocks and startles me when he looks particularly pale and tired. . . . Aside from my fondness for him personally, I feel that he has been very important to something that has made my world for me. I like it that I can make him

"Nolo contendere."

feel that I have hold of his hand to steady him as he goes on."

BLACK IRIS. 1926. Oil on canvas.—The first of O'Keeffe's paintings of greatly enlarged flowers appeared in 1924. To many people, the swelling forms and mysterious dark voids bore unmistakably sexual overtones, and any number of critics in discussing them made heavy use of Freud. O'Keeffe was offended. She had painted the flower image big, she later wrote, so that people would "be surprised into taking time to look at it" and would then perhaps see it as she did, in all its miraculous shape, color, and texture. "Well," O'Keeffe wrote, "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*."

Although O'Keeffe's work has been extravagantly praised from the very outset of her career, she has not been overly impressed by what critics have found to say about it. Attempts to uncover the sources of her imagery fill her with amazement. "Sometimes I know where an image comes from, sometimes not," she told me. "I think Arthur Dove was that way, too. Often, a picture just gets into my head without my having the least idea how it got there. But I'm much more down-to-earth than people give me credit for. At times, I'm ridiculously realistic."

After a pause, O'Keeffe continued, "I'll tell you what went on in my so-called mind when I did my paintings of animal skulls. There was a lot of talk in New York then—during the late twenties and early thirties—about the Great American Painting. It was like the Great American Novel. People wanted to 'do' the American scene. I had gone back and forth across the country several times by then, and some of the current ideas about the American scene struck me as pretty ridiculous. To them, the American scene was a dilapidated house with a broken-down buckboard out front and a horse that looked like a skeleton. I knew America was very rich, very lush. Well, I started painting my skulls about this time. First, I put a horse's skull against a blue-cloth background, and then I used a cow's skull. I had lived in the cattle country—Amarillo was the crossroads of cattle shipping, and you could see the cattle coming in across the range for days at a time. For goodness' sake, I thought, the people who talk about the American scene don't know anything about it. So, in a way, that cow's skull was my joke on the American scene, and it gave me

pleasure to make it in red, white, and blue."

To the critics, of course, O'Keeffe's skulls signified death, with overtones of crucifixion. O'Keeffe did not think of them that way at all. "The bones," she wrote in the catalogue for one of her New York exhibitions, "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." When she painted desert flowers with a skull ("Summer Days," 1936), she says, there was no symbolism intended. Nor was there in "Horse's Skull with Pink Rose" (1931). O'Keeffe explained to me that she had a collection of artificial flowers, which the Spanish people in her part of the country used for funeral decorations. "I was looking through them one day when someone came to the kitchen door," she said. "As I went to answer the door, I stuck a pink rose in the eye socket of a horse's skull. And when I came back the rose in the eye looked pretty fine, so I thought I would just go on with that."

Throughout her career, in a kind of counterpoint to the precise, stripped-down realism of her more familiar work, O'Keeffe has continued to paint abstract or semi-abstract pictures. Abstraction, of course, was very much in the wind when she first began going to exhibitions at 291. Arthur Dove was painting in a style of pure abstraction by 1910—whether Dove, in America, or Wassily Kandinsky, in Munich, got to pure abstraction first is a matter of critical dispute. O'Keeffe doesn't really know how she came to her own form of three-dimensional abstraction, characterized by strongly modelled forms and intense, luminous color. "What happens is that you pick up ideas here and there," she told me. "If you mention any particular source, it gives that too much emphasis." Her work, in any case, was nothing like the flat, lyrical abstractions of Kandinsky or other Europeans. Brancusi, on seeing O'Keeffe's painting, said, "There is no imitation of Europe here; it is a force—a liberating free force."

In recent years, several critics have come to see O'Keeffe as an important precursor of much contemporary American art. Eugene Goossen suggested in a 1967 article that O'Keeffe's work is in the true line of a native American aesthetic tradition, which was rudely interrupted by European influences as a result of the Armory Show, in 1913, but which reëmerged during the late nineteen-forties in the explosion

of Abstract Expressionism. O'Keeffe is also seen as having anticipated the more recent color-field abstraction of Kenneth Noland, Ellsworth Kelly, and others. She herself is particularly interested in Kelly, whose paintings, composed for the most part of flat, unmodulated areas of pure color, are nevertheless based, like O'Keeffe's, on natural shapes. "Sometimes I've thought one of his things was mine," she said last fall. "I've actually looked at one of Kelly's pictures and thought for a moment that I'd done it."

PURPLE HILLS NEAR ABIQUIU. 1935. Oil on canvas.—"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."—*O'Keeffe, letter to a friend.*

Georgia O'Keeffe and Rebecca Strand, an artist who was married to the photographer Paul Strand, spent the summer of 1929 in Taos. They stayed in one of the houses there that belonged to Mabel Dodge Luhan, the rich woman who had married an Indian from the Taos pueblo, and who liked to be surrounded by artists and writers. It was the same house that D. H. Lawrence and his wife, Frieda, had lived in for a summer. O'Keeffe had fallen in love with New Mexico in 1917, when she passed through Santa Fe with her younger sister Claudia on a vacation trip to Colorado. "From then on, I was always trying to get back there," she has said, "and in 1929 I finally made it."

Stieglitz continued to spend his summers, as usual, at Lake George, but from 1929 on he did so without O'Keeffe. The separations were painful for both of them. O'Keeffe was torn between her obligation to Stieglitz and her obligation to her work. In the high, wild desert country of New Mexico, she felt very close to something that she had been trying to reach in painting. "Lake George is not really painting country," she remarked last fall. "Out here, half your work is done for you." Once, O'Keeffe suggested in a letter to Mabel Dodge Luhan that she sometimes found it necessary to help Stieglitz by not getting in his way, and that this was why she came West in the summer. But the problem was obviously more complex. "The difficulty in getting out here was enormous, but I came," she told me quietly.

That summer of 1929, she painted

the country around Taos, working directly from nature. "In the evening, with the sun at your back, that high, sage-covered plain looks like an ocean," she said. "The color up there—the blue-green of the sage, and the mountains, and the wild flowers—is a different kind of color from anything I'd ever seen. There's nothing like it in Texas, or even in Colorado." Much to Mabel Dodge Luhan's annoyance, O'Keeffe spent only one summer in Taos. She had discovered the country to the west—the Rio Grande Valley, near the little village of Alcalde. "It was the shapes of the hills there that fascinated me," she said. "The reddish sand hills with the dark mesas behind them. It seemed as though no matter how far you walked you could never get into those dark hills, although I walked great distances. I've always liked to walk. I think I've taken a bath in every brook from Abiquiu to Espanola. Irrigation ditches are fine for bathing, too. They're just wide enough to lie down in. I found I could work in a place for two days before anyone bothered me. After two days, people would turn up and be curious, and then I'd move on somewhere else. If I hadn't finished, I would come back in a week and spend two more days. I was painting what I saw, as best I could. Sometimes I succeeded, sometimes not."

It may be assumed that O'Keeffe also wanted to keep a certain distance between herself and the Taos art colony. She rather liked Mabel Dodge Luhan—was amused by her, even when Mabel was at her bullying worst. Mabel and Dorothy Brett, the painter, and Frieda Lawrence, who had settled near Taos after D. H. Lawrence died, in 1930, carried on a running three-cornered feud. They had all idolized Lawrence, and each considered herself in some way his true muse—a situation that reached lunatic heights during their protracted squabble over Lawrence's ashes. To prevent Mabel from stealing and scattering the ashes (as she claimed Lawrence had wished), Frieda finally had them mixed with a ton of concrete and formed into a block.

"Frieda was very special," O'Keeffe recalls. "I can remember very clearly the first time I ever saw her, standing in a doorway, with her hair all frizzed out, wearing a cheap red calico dress that looked as though she'd just wiped out the frying pan with it. She was not thin, and not young, but there was something radiant and wonderful about her. They were a funny crew over in Taos. They'd have terrible fights, and

not speak to one another for days. But there weren't that many interesting people around, so sooner or later they would make up. Mabel could be pretty mean, of course. She had the ability to paralyze a whole room. She would invite a lot of people to her big house and seat them around in a circle, and they would be so intimidated by her that nobody would say a word. And then the next day Mabel would go on about how everyone in Taos was so stupid. Mabel and Tony Luhan really met their match in each other, I always thought. Tony stayed top of the heap, and he did it through silence. Sometimes he'd get mad at Mabel and fling his blanket around him and say he was going to go to the pueblo. Mabel always worried that he'd decide not to come back. But the time Mabel went East to have an operation, Tony lay like a log across her bed for days, missing her. They needed each other—no doubt about it.

"One summer, Mabel was going away on a trip, and she invited me to come and use her studio. I thought that might be nice for a few days, so I went, but I stayed only one night. The next day, I went over to the Sage Brush Inn, near Taos. Well, Mabel came back early from her trip, and demanded that I return and stay with her. I explained that I couldn't work all day and then be with people in the evening—it just wasn't possible—but I said that if I had a day when I wasn't working I would call her up and come over. I did call her one day, and Mabel said, 'Oh, no, you can't come. Tony's invited the peyote singers here, and we have too many people already.' Later that afternoon, Tony came to the inn to pick me up. I told him what Mabel had said, and Tony came into my room and sat down in a rocking chair in the corner. 'I go to lot of trouble, get peyote singers,' he said. 'She no invite my friend, I not go.' And he didn't. He sat there all evening, rocking in that chair. Mabel was furious."

O'Keeffe and Tony Luhan were great friends. Tony used to take Rebecca Strand and her on camping trips to Mesa Verde, Inscription Rock, the Canyon de Chelly, and other places. (Mabel had periods of minding and periods of not minding, according to O'Keeffe.) On occasion, Tony even confided to her his deep feelings about his wife. Mabel, for her part, was a great but rather frustrated admirer of Stieglitz. "She had known Stieglitz long before I did, and she always wanted to get him out there," O'Keeffe told me. "He never came,

which was just as well. He was such a worrying person—he had the sort of mind that wouldn't have let me drive five miles to market without worrying." (His anxieties might have been understandable. Around Taos, O'Keeffe's difficulties in learning to drive a car were legendary.)

Every fall, O'Keeffe returned to New York and to Stieglitz, who remained very much the center of her life. After his death, in 1946, she spent three more winters in New York, settling his estate and dividing his extensive art collection among six different institutions, including the National Gallery, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Metropolitan Museum. Stieglitz had wanted his collection to be kept together in New York, but she had always told him that she thought it had to be divided, and he left the decision up to her. In 1949, she moved to New Mexico for good.

BLACK ROCK WITH BLUE, No. V. 1971. Oil on canvas.—The smooth, rounded rock form fills the canvas, nearly touching the edges at either side. Black rock, white ground, blue sky—three simple colored shapes. The painting hangs on the end wall of O'Keeffe's studio in Abiquiu. "I felt that I'd done what I wanted to do in it," she said. "I don't always get what I try for, you know."

The Abiquiu house was in ruins when O'Keeffe bought it in 1945. She had had her eye on the place for years—ever since she drove by in a car one day and saw, through a break in the adobe wall, an enclosed garden and a tumbledown house. The man who owned it said he planned to put up a motel there but would sell for six thousand dollars. Too much. A few years later, the man died and left the property to the Catholic Church; O'Keeffe was told that she could have it for less, but by this time she was in the process of buying the house at Ghost Ranch. Then the war came, and gas rationing, and only one trip to town a week to buy fresh vegetables, and she began to think again about the walled-in garden at Abiquiu. It took three years to rebuild the house and make it livable. The place was roofless and crumbling to dust. All available building supplies in the area were still going to the atomic facility at Los Alamos, and it was almost impossible, she says, to buy a nail. By 1949, though, when she moved West for good, the Abiquiu house was ready.

"I've never wanted to make it look Spanish, or Indian, or anything like that," she told me. "I wanted it to be my house." There is more furniture

than at the Ghost Ranch, but not much. O'Keeffe lives mainly in the studio, a long white room that used to be the stable, with wide windows overlooking the Rio Chama Valley. The best of her hi-fi systems is in the studio, and so is a large proportion of her record collection, which runs to instrumental music from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century. (Monteverdi is a favorite.) Two of her own paintings hang here—a 1950 abstraction in blue, black, and white, and the 1971 "Black Rock." The only other work of art in the room is a print by Hiroshige—a snow scene in three panels—which she keeps covered with a cloth against fading. Large worktables take up one end of the room, with matters of current interest in neat piles all over them—magazines and books, reproductions, correspondence, a photograph clipped from a newspaper of a Viking ship with a prow that rises to an extraordinary curling peak. The floor is carpeted in white.

In Abiquiu, O'Keeffe becomes managerial. She confers at length with the cook and with her sister Claudia, who presides over the well-irrigated garden that provides all the fruit, vegetables, and corn for both houses; she answers the telephone and attends to correspondence. Since her big 1970 retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum, there has been an increase in correspondence with museums and galleries that want her to lend paintings, which she does rarely and only under the strictest conditions. In the art world, her reputation now is as high as it has ever been, or higher, and her prices have always been impressive. (In 1927, Stieglitz sold an O'Keeffe flower painting for three thousand dollars and another painting for six thousand.) Recently, and through no efforts of her own, she has become something of an idol to the new generation of feminists, whose tactics sometimes cause her to wonder how they can hope to accomplish much, "jumping around that way." But then O'Keeffe herself has never had much trouble accomplishing what she wanted to accomplish. "Dealing with Georgia is very easy, provided you do exactly what she wants," a museum director said last fall.

She has contributed generously to her adopted village. For some years, she has helped needy children get through school. She has built a gymnasium for the village, and has given funds to improve the water system. Except for O'Keeffe, the storekeeper, and the Catholic priest, the population of Abiquiu is Spanish-American and In-

dian. "When I first moved here, the children had nowhere to go when it got dark," she told me. "They'd play out in the street in front of the cantina until sundown and then sometimes they would come in here to see me. After a time, I took to sending them in my car when they had games with other schools. Once a week, I sent them to the movies in Espanola. The boys used to talk a lot about having a gymnasium, and eventually I had a gymnasium built. Now those same boys are grown up and have children of their own." A man who knows and likes O'Keeffe and who lives in another Spanish-American village some distance away, insisted years ago on giving her two large and aggressive blue chows for protection. She came to adore the dogs but has never felt any need for their protective qualities. "I find the Spanish-American people very gentle and immensely polite," she says.

The sitting room at Abiquiu is fairly luxurious by O'Keeffe's standards. There are three comfortable chairs, a built-in adobe bench with cushions, and a glass-topped table, which she likes because, as she says, "it looks as though it almost didn't exist." The end window faces the garden, and its wide sill holds some of the choicest rocks from her collection. On a low table against the wall are art books and a small oil by Arthur Dove—an abstraction called "Golden Sunlight." Her own "Sky Above Clouds," one of the series that grew out of her travels by jet plane, fills the wall at the far end. A delicate black Calder mobile hangs near the fireplace. It is a cool night—cool enough for a fire in the rounded, hivelike little fireplace, where the piñon logs stand up on end and are ignited by piñon shavings.

"I think Dove came to abstraction quite naturally," O'Keeffe says, reflectively. "It was his way of thinking. Kandinsky was very showy about it, but Dove had an earthy, simple quality that led directly to abstraction. His things are very special. I always wish I'd bought more of them. And all the people Dove influenced, who are better known now than he is! The Museum of Modern Art never gave him a really important show—I don't know why. Dove used to paint a lot of small pictures, little landscapes, that didn't look particularly distinguished at first, but in them he would get the feel of a particular place so completely that you'd know you'd *been* there."

O'Keeffe has often said that she does not much like pictures. When she

WINE TALK

by Austin, Nichols

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travels, as she has done extensively since Stieglitz's death, she spends little time in museums or galleries. The heights of Machu Picchu, the Lipizzaner horses of the Spanish Riding School, in Vienna, the ruins of Angkor Wat—these are the sort of thing she goes to see, and she is never disappointed. "But I mentally destroy the pictures I look at," she said, with an amused smile. "I'm very critical. I don't seem to have the kind of pleasure I know a lot of other people have in pictures. That's why I was so surprised when I went to the Prado in 1953—because everything there was so exciting to me. Maybe the fact that the pictures had not been cleaned had something to do with it.

"It's funny to me that I enjoy Goya so much," she went on, after a moment. "One of the first things I ever bought was a reproduction of a Goya in the Metropolitan—I hope it's still considered a Goya. It's a portrait of a man in knee breeches. Goya seems so foreign to me, and yet I enjoy him as much as any other Occidental artist. His prints—a lot of them, anyway—show some pretty terrible things, things that usually make me squeamish. But not the way Goya does them. Of course, my favorite is Chinese painting. I'd still say it's the best that's been done."

She got up to put some more wood on the fire. When she was in her thirties, she said, she was troubled with arthritis, but it had disappeared years ago; she thought the secret was in keeping warm enough. "Now I haven't a creak. I suppose that's remarkable."

The conversation turned to the number of letters she gets these days from young artists and would-be artists who want to see her and show her their work. O'Keeffe does not believe in giving advice. " 'Go home and work.' That's all I can tell anyone," she said. "You can't help people that way. I think one of my best times was when nobody was interested in me. That may have come from my not being the favorite child in the family, and not minding that I wasn't—it left me very free. My older brother was a favorite, and I can remember comparing myself to him and feeling I could do better. In my case, I never cared anything at all what other people thought. I always knew I could earn a living doing something else besides painting, so I wasn't worried. I could just do what I wanted to do, and I didn't have to care what people thought. Oh, if I'd followed people's advice it would have been hopeless. That

man Bement gave me some very good advice. He told me things to see and do, and he was very helpful. But if I'd really done in painting what he wanted me to do, nobody would ever have thought anything about me.

"The truth is I've been very lucky. Stieglitz was the most interesting center of energy in the art world just when I was trying to find my way. To have him get interested in me was a very good thing. My going to Texas was lucky, and, of course, my finding this place. And then, somehow, what I painted happened to fit into the emotional life of my time—does that sound right to you? Often, I've had the feeling that I could have been a much better painter and had far less recognition. It's just that what I do seems to move people today, in a way that I don't understand at all. Now and then when I get an idea for a picture, I think, How ordinary. Why paint that old rock? Why not go for a walk instead? But then I realize that to someone else it may not seem ordinary."

O'Keeffe was silent for a time, gazing at the bare adobe wall beyond the fireplace. "I just think that some people are very lucky," she said.

—CALVIN TOMKINS

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THERE'LL ALWAYS BE AN ENGLAND

[*From the London Times*]

A girl aged 16 is to appear at Duns Sheriff Court, Berwickshire, in March accused of ill-treating prawns, a charge brought under the Protection of Animals (Scotland) Act, 1912.

Eleanor Donoghy, a fish worker, of Springdale, Tweedmouth, Northumberland, is alleged to have ill-treated prawns by putting them on a hotplate at a factory and watching them jump about before they died.

Entering a plea of not guilty at the court today Mr. Robert Mackay, her solicitor, challenged the relevance of the case on two grounds. He claimed that to be relevant the charge must refer to animals. Under section 13 an animal was classed as any domestic or captive animal.

Prawns were not mentioned. Under another section the Act refers to birds, fish and reptiles in captivity. If a prawn was a fish he believed the word "captivity" meant being kept alive in an aquarium. After referring to the *Standard Natural Book* he was convinced a prawn was not a fish but an insect.

Sheriff James Paterson said if this were so, the prosecution could have grave difficulties. Mr. Hamish Stirling, procurator fiscal, said the charge referred to the cruel ill-treating and torturing of animals. The question might be whether a prawn was an animal.

Sheriff Paterson said he would want to hear expert evidence from a zoologist. He fixed the trial for March 8.

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE PROFILE

Calvin Tomkins

FROM THE FARAWAY NEARBY. 1937. Oil on canvas. -- Bleached white antlers branching from the dark skull fill most of the picture space. A range of low hills occupy what would be the foreground except that it is drawn in distant perspective, a faraway desert landscape over which the elk's skull presides neither symbolically nor realistically, an image not susceptible to interpretation, an O'Keeffe. Years ago she said she had no theories to offer. Her painting, she said, was "like a thread that runs through all the reasons for all the other things that make one's life."

Georgia O'Keeffe, who is eighty-six, spends almost no time thinking about the past. "You'd push the past out of your way entirely if you only could," she said to me one day last fall, sitting in the open patio of her house at Ghost Ranch, in the New Mexican high desert seventy miles northwest of Santa Fe. What interested her at the moment were the wild purple asters that grow in such profusion

at this time of the year. It was largely because of the purple asters that she asked John Hamilton, the young man who had recently become her friend & assistant new secretary, driver, and general assistant to take us out in her Volkswagen bus to the Monastery of Christ in the Desert, a seventeen-mile ~~trip~~ by barely navigable dirt roads. Although the asters at the monastery were less plentiful than she had remembered them, she spent a pleasant hour chatting with the Dominican monks and admiring the chapel, built in 1965 by Nakashima and furnished as sparsely as her own house with split-log benches, woodcarvings by a local artist, and a gory wooden crucifix in the Spanish manner. Miss O'Keeffe had visited the monastery several times, most recently for the dawn service last Easter, and the monks were very pleased to see her. On the drive back, bouncing imperturbably in the rear seat, she said that it would be a very simple thing for her to convert someone to Catholicism. "It has great appeal," she said. "Not for me, of course -- but I can see the appeal."

Her voice is quiet and yet clearly audible. She was dressed entirely in white -- a white jacket with pockets, a full skirt of the same durable material, white shoes. Jerrie Newsom, the Spanish-American woman who cooks for her and takes care of the house, told me that when people ask whether Miss O'Keeffe has only one dress, she explains that "Miss O'Keeffe has a hundred dresses but they're all alike, except some are black instead of white." The dress suits her in any case. A slight, immaculate woman with white hair tied back in a smooth knot, she is as handsome today as she was at thirty, when Stieglitz began his famous multiple portrait of her that would eventually include nearly five hundred photographs, and which no one is allowed to look at, in the Metropolitan

Museum, without her permission. O'Keeffe's personal correspondence with Stieglitz, whom she married in 1924, has been sealed until the year 2020. By this and other means she preserves her privacy.

During the drive back from the Monastery she told us how she had discovered the Ghost Ranch. "I'd been staying down around Alcalde, east of here, for several summers in the nineteen thirties. One day, the boy who was trying to teach me to drive said he knew of a place he thought I'd like, and he brought me up here. It was operating as a dude ranch then, being run by the same people who started the Bishop's Lodge in Tesuque. Before that it had been a working ranch. I think the story is that a family had been murdered there, and from time to time a woman carrying a child appears in the original house -- that's the ghost. Well, I came back a few days later, alone, and asked if I could stay. The owners said I could stay the night, but that unless some other guest failed to show up I'd have to leave in the morning. That night, a family moved out -- the son developed appendicitis -- and I moved in. That was in 1935, and I've been here every summer since then. I knew the minute I got up on this plateau that this was where I lived."

She bought her own house, which is about a mile from the ranch itself, in 1940. A few years ago the Ghost Ranch was sold to the Presbyterian Church, which now uses it as a conference center. Miss O'Keeffe has given the Presbyterians a sufficiently wide berth. "You know about the Indian eye that passes over you without lingering, as thought you didn't exist?" she said. "That was the way I used to look at the Presbyterians at the ranch, so they wouldn't become too friendly."

Although she owns a larger and more comfortable house in the village of Abiquiu, sixteen miles east of the ranch, Miss O'Keeffe has always felt more at home up here. The solitude, the stillness, and the harsh, dry,

splehdid landscape are more her world. Animal skulls and bleached antlers hang on the walls of the ~~open~~ patio, ~~skongxxkkk~~ and rocks picked up on her walks and camping trips spill in profusion over low tables and shelves. A few years ago, (when O'Keeffe and several others were gone) ~~on one of her several trips~~ down the Colorado River -- ten days in a pontoon boat, sleeping under the stars every night -- ~~O'Keeffe's~~ her friend Eliot Porter, the photographer, found a particularly beautiful stone that O'Keeffe very much wanted for her collection. Porter said he was keeping it for his wife. Matters were a trifle touchy for a time, but then a few weeks later the Porters came to ~~Abiquiu~~ O'Keeffe's house for dinner and presented her with the stone, ~~to O'Keeffe.~~ "When she wants something she makes people give it to her," Stieglitz once remarked. "They feel she is fine and has something other people have not." Not that she wants many possessions. "I like to have things as sparse as possible," she told me. "If you have an empty wall you can think on it better. I like a space to think in -- if you can call what I do thinking."

~~Now that her eyesight has begun to fail her -- a heavy and unanticipated blow that O'Keeffe never mentions -- she thinks more and more of selling~~ O'Keeffe sometimes thinks she ought to sell the Abiquiu house and ~~living only~~ live permanently at the ranch. "Last year Jerrie and I were here into December," she said. "Being up here is one of the best things I know. There is nothing in the house that I can get along without."

LIGHT COMING ON THE PLAINS, NO. II. 1917. Watercolor. - An impression of endless dark space under a vault of sky. A narrow, ragged beam of white near the bottom suggests the horizon but not specifically; in O'Keeffe's work nature is not so much analyzed as meditated upon, the result being an abstracttion that does not look

abstract. When she painted it, O'Keeffe had been living for two years on the wide, windswept plains of north Texas, teaching school. "That was my country," she wrote in 1919, "-- terrible winds and a wonderful emptiness."

There is little to indicate why she should have felt at home in such a landscape. She was born and brought up in the gentler wheat-farming country of southern Wisconsin, the second of seven children in a well-to-do family. "My mother's and my father's families had farms that adjoined," she told me, "and eventually my father bought my mother's property. They raised all kinds of things there, even tobacco. I can still see the enormous loads of hay coming into the barns in the evening -- I've never seen loads of hay like that anywhere." On rainy days their mother used to read aloud to her older brother, who had weak eyes. ~~the children on rainy days.~~ O'Keeffe ~~loved this, and~~ always listened, even after she had learned how to read, herself. Her favorites were stories about the old West.

"My memories of childhood are quite pleasant," she said, "although I hated school." Until she was twelve, she went to the local school in Sun Prairie. For a period O'Keeffe and two of her sisters also went into the town of Madison once a week for private lessons in drawing and music -- today she says she can't remember a time when she couldn't read music, and it has sometimes seemed to her that she might have become a musician. The family was not a terribly close one, and she rarely played with her brothers or sisters. One day, when she was ten, she told her friend Lena, the daughter of the woman who did the family's washing, that she was going to be an artist. "I have no idea where that came from," she said. "I just

remember saying it."

Because the harsh Wisconsin winters seemed to be undermining ~~Mrs.~~ Mr. O'Keeffe's health, ~~and in 1920~~ the family moved in 1920 to Williamsburg, Virginia. Georgia was sent away to boarding school at the Chatham Episcopal Institute, where she was far from a model student. At the convent school in Madison that she had attended for a year before they moved, she had been comparatively well-behaved, but at Chatham she devoted a lot of thought and energy to breaking the rules. "I'd go for long walks in the woods, which wasn't allowed. I wouldn't read my French lesson aloud to myself ~~[illegible]~~ three times, as we were told to do, and in class when the teacher asked whether I had done it I would say no, that I didn't have the time for that. I always had enough demerits to be expelled if I got one more. And I never did learn to spell. My friend Doris Bry says now that I've ruined her spelling because I misspell with such confidence."

She was going to be an artist. After graduating from Chatham she entered the Art Institute of Chicago, but a ~~[illegible]~~ serious bout with typhoid the following spring caused her to withdraw, and she spent a long convalescence at home. In 1907 she enrolled in the Art Students League in New York, where she won a ~~[illegible]~~ prize for still life and a scholarship to the League's summer school at Lake George. O'Keeffe remembers that at the League she was everybody's pet. Her hair, which had only just started to grow in after her illness, was short and curly, a rare phenomenon at the time. Any number of fellow students wanted to paint O'Keeffe, whose strong, clean features and intensely expressive hands and eyes, a few years later, would so fascinate Stieglitz. She disliked posing, and has occasionally said that her unwillingness to put others through such an ordeal ruled out any interest she might have taken in painting the human

face or body. There was never any question about her talent. But the rather slick, academic imitations of European styles then being taught at the League by William M. Chase, Kenyon Cox and others soon lost all interest for her. "I began to realize," she told the art historian Katharine Kuh in 1962, "that a lot of people had done this kind of painting before I came along. It had been done and I didn't think I could do it any better." O'Keeffe decided to give up painting, and for the next four years she did not paint.

She went to Chicago and became a commercial designer, drawing lace and embroidery for advertisements. In the summer of 1912, however, home on a visit to her family who had moved from Williamsburg to Charlottesville, she was persuaded by one of her sisters to register for Alon Bement's summer art class at the University of Virginia. Bement was a disciple of Arthur Wesley Dow, the head of the fine arts department at Columbia University's Teachers College, and, according to Lloyd Goodrich, "one of the few sophisticated American art educators of the time." Dow had known and worked with Gauguin in France, and he was also a great admirer of Chinese and Japanese painting. As O'Keeffe would say after studying with Dow himself, "This man had one dominating idea: to fill space in a beautiful way." Bement taught according to Dow's principles of design, which eventually proved to be, for O'Keeffe, a way out of the dead-end of academic realism. ~~She began painting again. At Bement's suggestion she returned~~ Bement invited her to come back the following summer -- and for two summers after that -- to teach with him at the University of Virginia, and at Bement's urging she went to New York in 1914 to study with Dow. In the meanwhile, she earned her living as an art teacher in the public schools of north Texas.

"That came about because of a girl I had known at Chatham Institute,"

O'Keeffe told me. "The girls there all thought I was pretty strange and I thought they were pretty strange, mainly because we spoke so differently. There was one girl named Alice Peretta, from Laredo, Texas, who hated me, or so I was told. Well, when I heard that, I bet some of the others that I could get her to like me, and I got to work on Alice. After we left Chatham we corresponded. She began teaching school in Amarillo, and when the art teacher there left she suggested that they hire me, and they did. I was hugely excited about going to Texas, because of all those stories that mother had read to us. Texas was the great place in the world so far as I was concerned.

"I got very interested in teaching," O'Keeffe went on. "After two years in Amarillo I became head of the art department of the normal school in Canyon, about twenty miles away. What I enjoyed was teaching people who had no interest in becoming artists. Dow's teaching had been based on the idea that the same principles applied no matter what sort of work you were doing -- pottery, making wallets, anything. He thought everybody had to use these principles in everything they did. Dow gave us exercises in the arrangement of color and shape, dark and light, smooth and rough and so forth. One of his exercises was to take a maple leaf and fit it into a seven-inch square in various ways. Of course, when I got to north Texas there was nothing like a leaf to use. The only tree around was the locust, and its leaves were too small to do anything with. There was just nothing for the children to use, and they were too poor to go out and buy an orange. I'd get them to draw a square and put a door in it somewhere -- anything to start them thinking about how to divide a space. Pretty soon I got so interested in teaching I wondered why I should be paid for it.

"And then of course I liked everything about Texas. I didn't even

mind the dust, although sometimes when I came back from a walk I'd be the color of the road. Oh, the sun was hot, and the wind was hard, and you got cold in the winter -- I was just crazy about all of it. I remember one morning in Canyon, I got up very early and ~~hired~~ a taxi to take me for a drive -- 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 back to town I thought maybe that was something I could paint. It was really what started me painting again. I worked in watercolor, because I never had any time for oils."

Although much of the new work looked wholly abstract, it was always based on something she had seen in the landscape. The LIGHT COMING ON THE PLAINS series came out of what she often saw in the very early morning, before the sun rose. "The light would begin to appear, and then it would disappear and there would be a kind of halo effect, and then it would appear again. The light would come and go for quite a while before it finally came. It was the same with the trains. You could see the morning train coming, a long way off, and then it would disappear, and then you'd see it again closer. The country was so flat, but there were slight depressions in it and things would drop out of sight. Anyway, my teaching schedule was usually arranged so that I had two hours a day to myself, and that's when I used to paint. It was a good time for me. I was getting very interested in what was mine."

RADIATOR BUILDING - NIGHT, NEW YORK. 1927. Oil on canvas. -- A tall office building with its brilliantly illuminated tower and its patterns of dark and lighted windows, part of the precise nighttime geometry of Manhattan. Colors intense as neon. On the left, on top of another building, a big electric sign spells out the words "ALFRED STIEGLITZ."

They met for the first time in 1916. O'Keeffe, of course, had often visited the Stieglitz gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue, had seen there the Rodin drawings, the first Cezannes and Matisses and Picassos to be shown in America; had almost certainly overheard Stieglitz talking to other visitors in his volcanic style, preaching the cause of modernism and upholding the artist's integrity against the multiple corruptions of the age. But they did not actually meet until a spring day in 1916 when O'Keeffe, learning that Stieglitz had hung a group of her recent drawings in his gallery without her knowledge or permission, came to make him take them down. Stieglitz was not even there the first time she came down -- he was on jury duty. She returned a day or so later and confronted him indignantly. O'Keeffe, who has grown exceedingly tired of this story over the years, will say only that he managed to talk her out of removing the drawings. "He was a good talker," is the way she puts it.

The drawings, which came before the first Texas watercolors, were the first fruits of a decision she had made in 1915 to paint only what was in her head (everything she had done before that, she decided, showed the influence of one or another of her teachers.) "I hadn't thought before about doing what was in my head," she told me. "I hadn't even known anything was there. But when I began to think about it, it seemed very simple." The series of charcoal

drawings that she did in the fall of 1915, following this decision, were for the most part abstractions based on forms in nature. O'Keeffe, who was teaching just then at a small college in South Carolina, sent a group of the drawings to her friend Anita Pollitzer in New York, with instructions to show them to no one. Miss Pollitzer had studied at the Art Students League with O'Keeffe. She was currently the secretary of the New York branch of the National Woman's Party -- "a very lively little person," in O'Keeffe's description, "who used to carry everything under one arm -- books, sketch pad, notes, brush and comb -- and who usually had some paint on her face or in her very long hair." She took the drawings straight to Stieglitz, who looked at them and made his famous remark, "At last a woman on paper," kept them for several months, and then exhibited them the following spring along with work by Charles Duncan and René Lafferty. By this time O'Keeffe was back in New York, studying with Dow at Teachers College.

A year later, Stieglitz gave her a one-woman show -- her first -- at '291.' O'Keeffe was in Texas at the time, teaching, but when she heard that her show would be the last ever held at (291) -- the building was going to be torn down -- she took all her money out of the bank and came east to see it. The show had been dismantled before she arrived, but Stieglitz rehung it for her. He also photographed her for the first time, before she went back to Texas. The following summer, Stieglitz offered to pay her living expenses for one year so that she could devote herself entirely to painting. O'Keeffe resigned from teaching and came to New York to live.

She became a member of ~~the~~ Stieglitz's (inner) circle, which included the painters John Marin, Charles Demuth, Arthur Dove, and Marsden Hartley, the photographers Paul Strand and Paul Haviland, and the critics Charles Caffin and Marius de Zayas. "I met a great many people," O'Keeffe ~~xxxxxxxx~~

said, recalling those days. "There was Stieglitz's circle, and there was also the circle around the Stettheimer sisters -- Florine, the painter, and Ettie, who wrote poetry. Whenever Florine finished a painting she would invite everybody in for tea. Nothing in her house looked as though it had ever been used. Once I made this comment about a red cushion, and Florine said very indignantly, 'I sit on it every day!' Another time, I remember, I was sitting there just behind the new painting, and Marcel Duchamp was in a chair facing me. I finished my tea and Duchamp got up from his chair and took my teacup from me with the most extraordinary grace -- with a gesture that was so elegant I've never forgotten it.

"Demuth was very elegant, too. He was also more amusing than any of the artists I knew. He had diabetes, and he would come to New York from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he lived in a house that had been in his family since 1745, and he would eat everything he wasn't allowed to eat, and get quite sick. In my memory he is the only artist who was any fun to be with. We were always going to do a picture together, a flower painting, but we never did. He had a club foot, and the effort of walking must have been terrible for him -- his collar wilted even on the coldest days. His ears stuck out from his head like horns. We always had lunch or dinner with him when he came to town, and we always enjoyed it."

When Stieglitz and O'Keeffe were married in 1924, he was sixty and she was thirty-seven. He had been married before; she had not. In addition to being the greatest living photographer -- the man who had managed almost singlehandedly to revolutionize the medium and to force its recognition as a legitimate means of producing art -- he was the center of the modern movement in America. He often described his

exhibition galleries -- first '291' and later the Intimate Gallery and An American Place -- as laboratories for experiment rather than places where pictures were sold, and not infrequently he refused to sell to people whose motives his mistrusted. "Stieglitz liked the idea of a group," O'Keeffe said. "He wanted something to come out of America, something really important, and he felt that you couldn't do that alone." O'Keeffe, for her part, did not like groups and was never comfortable in them. For more than twenty years she lived without complaint the kind of life that Stieglitz's public role demanded. "I never knew how many there would be for dinner," she said. "It seemed as though anyone who was around the gallery in the late afternoon would come back afterwards." During those years, living on the thirtieth floor of the Shelton Hotel and later in an apartment near the East River on fifty-fourth street, she managed in spite of interruptions to get a considerable amount of painting done. In the summer they went to Lake George, where the large and somewhat contentious Stieglitz clan came together in a house filled with Victorian furniture and knicknacks. "There would be from fifteen to twenty people at the table, and four times as much food as anyone could eat," O'Keeffe recalls. "It was hard for me to work there because I can never bear to have people around me when I'm working, or to let anybody see what I'm doing or say anything about it until it's finished. Stieglitz never could understand that. Stieglitz did almost all his own work in the summer. In the winter, people were his work."

Dozens of the people he knew and influenced have tried to write their impressions of Stieglitz, but O'Keeffe feels that no one has come close to describing him accurately. "Stieglitz was a very contradictory person," she said last fall. "For example, he would start out in the morning saying one thing, and by noon he would be saying the exact opposite, and then in the evening he would have changed his mind again. He thought aloud, you see. He could become very enthusiastic about someone's work,

and then forget all about it. But he said everything with such conviction that people always believed him. He had such power with words. Stieglitz used words in unique, almost violent way, that nobody's ever been able to reproduce. It was appalling to me the way he could tear somebody to pieces -- and that person would accept it because it was Stieglitz talking.

"His mind was quicker than mine, of course, but when I really knew I was right I could often wear him down. I seldom argued with him, though. He was the sort of person who could be destroyed completely if you disagreed with him. ~~You had to let him be what he was.~~ Actually, for someone who carried on in the world as much as he did, Stieglitz was something of a child. You had to humor him a good deal. When I was first with him, he ate for breakfast every morning exactly six pieces of zwieback and a cup of cocoa made with water -- and that would be all he had until six in the evening. There had always been too much food at his family's; I think he reacted against that by never eating enough.

"The relationship Stieglitz and I had was really very good because it was built on something more than just emotional needs. Both of us were really interested in what the other was doing. I think what he did in photography was one of the great documents of the period. Of course, you do your best to destroy each other without knowing it -- some people do it knowingly and some do it unknowingly. But if you have a real basis, as we did, you can get along anyway."

In a letter to the New York Sun's art critic, Henry McBride, during the nineteen twenties, O'Keeffe wrote about her own "particular kind of vanity." She did not in the least mind being ignored, she wrote, "but I don't like to be second or third or fourth. I like being first, if I'm noticed at all. That's why I get on with Stieglitz. With him I

feel first. And when he is around, and there are others, he is the center and I don't count at all."

And a few years later, again to McBride: "I see Alfred as an old man that I am very fond of -- growing older -- so that it sometimes shocks and startles me when he looks particularly pale and tired... Aside from my fondness for him personally I feel that he has been very important to something that has made my world for me. I like it that I can make him feel that I have hold of his hand to steady him as he goes on."

BLACK IRIS. 1926. Oil on canvas. -- The first ~~paintings~~ of her paintings of greatly enlarged flowers appeared in 1924, the same year she married Stieglitz. To many people the ~~suggestive~~ swelling forms and mysterious dark voids bore unmistakeably sexual overtones, and any number of critics, in discussing them, made heavy use of ~~Freudian~~ Freud. ~~analysis~~. O'Keeffe was offended. She had painted the flower image big, as she later explained, so that people would "be surprised into taking time to look at it," and would then perhaps see it as she did in all its miraculous shape, color, and texture. "Well," O'Keeffe ~~wrote,~~ "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."

Although O'Keeffe's work has been extravagantly praised from the very outset of her career, she has not been overly impressed by what critics have found to say about it. Attempts to uncover the true

sources of her imagery fill her with amazement. "Sometimes I know where an image comes from, sometimes not," she told me. "I think Arthur Dove was that way, too. Often a picture just gets into my head without my having the least idea how it got there. But I'm much more down-to-earth than people give me credit for. At times, I'm ridiculously realistic.

"I'll tell you what went on in my so-called mind when I did my paintings of animal skulls," she said, after a pause. "There was a lot of talk in New York then -- during the late twenties and early thirties -- about the Great American Painting. It was like the Great American Novel. People wanted to 'do' the American scene. I had gone back and forth across the country several times by then, and some of their ideas about the American scene struck me as pretty ridiculous. To them the American scene was a broken-down buckboard and a decayed house. I knew America was very rich, very lush. Well, I started painting my skulls about this time. First I put a horse's skull against a blue cloth background, and then I used a cow's skull. I had lived in the cattle country -- Amarillo was the crossroads of cattle shipping, and you could see the cattle coming in for days at a time. For Goodness sake, I thought, the people who talk about the American scene don't know anything about it. So in a way that cow's skull was my joke on the American scene, and it gave me pleasure to make it in red, white, and blue."

To the critics, of course, O'Keeffe's skulls signified death, with overtones of crucifixion. O'Keeffe did not think of them that way at all. "The bones," she wrote in the catalog to one of her New York exhibitions, "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 for all its beauty." When she painted desert flowers with a skull (SUMMER DAYS, 1936), she says, there was no symbolism intended. O'Keeffe explained to me that she had a collection of artificial flowers, which the Spanish people in her part of the country used for funeral decorations. "I was looking through them one day," she said, "when someone came to the kitchen door. As I went to answer the door I stuck a rose down in the eye socket of a skull. And when I came back, the rose in the eye looked pretty fine, so I ~~meant~~ thought I would just go on with that."

Throughout her career, in a kind of counterpoint to the precise, stripped-down realism of her more familiar work, O'Keeffe has continued to paint abstract or semi-abstract pictures. Abstraction, of course, was very much in the wind when she first began going to exhibitions at '291.' Arthur Dove was painting in a style of pure abstraction by 1910 -- whether Dove, in America, or Wassily Kandinsky, in Munich, got to pure abstraction first is a matter of critical dispute. O'Keeffe doesn't really know how she came to her own form of three-dimensional abstraction, characterized by strongly modelled forms and intense, luminous color. "What happens is that you pick up ideas here and there," she said. "If you mention any particular source it gives that too much emphasis." Her work, in any case, was nothing like the flat, lyrical abstractions of Kandinsky or other Europeans. Brancusi, on seeing O'Keeffe's painting, said, "There is no imitation of Europe here; it is a force, a liberating free force."

In recent years several critics have come to see O'Keeffe as an important precursor of much contemporary American art. Eugene Goossen suggested in a 1967 article that O'Keeffe's work is in the true line of

a native American esthetic tradition that was rudely interrupted by European influences as a result of the Armory Show in 1913, but which re-emerged during the nineteen forties in the explosion of abstract expressionism. O'Keeffe is also seen as having anticipated the more recent color-field abstraction of Kenneth Noland, Ellsworth Kelly, and others. She herself is particularly interested in Kelly, whose paintings, composed for the most part of flat, unmodulated areas of pure color, are nevertheless based, like O'Keeffe's, on natural shapes. "Sometimes I've thought one of his things was mine," she said last fall. "I've actually looked at one of Kelly's pictures and thought for a moment that I'd done it."

PURPLE MOUNTAINS NEAR ABIQUIU. 1935. Oil on canvas. -- "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 on a pale green hill where I could look all around at the red, yellow, purple formations, mibes all around, the colors all intensified by the pale green I was standing on."
(O'Keeffe, letter to a friend)

Georgia O'Keeffe and Rebecca Strand, an artist who was married to the photographer Paul Strand, spent the summer of 1929 in Taos. They stayed in one of the houses there that belonged to Mabel Dodge Luhan, a rich Englishwoman who had married an Indian from the Taos pueblo, and who liked to be surrounded with artists and writers. It was the same house that D.H. Lawrence and his wife, Frieda, had lived in the previous summer, before going on to Mexico. O'Keeffe had fallen in love with New Mexico in 1917, when she passed through Santa Fe with her younger

sister, Claudia, on a vacation trip to Colorado. "From then on I was always trying to get back there," she has said, "and in 1929 I finally made it."

Stieglitz continued to spend the summer as usual at Lake George, but from 1929 on he would do so without O'Keeffe. The separations were painful for them both. O'Keeffe was torn between her obligation to Stieglitz and the obligation to her work. In the high, wild, desert country to New Mexico she felt very close to something that she had been trying to reach in painting. "Lake George is not really painting country," she has said. "Out here, half your work is done for you." Once O'Keeffe suggested, in a letter to Mabel Dodge Luhan, that she sometimes found it necessary to help Stieglitz by not getting in his way, and that this was why she came west in the summer. But the problem was obviously more complex. "The difficulty in getting out here was enormous," she told me, quietly, "but I came."

That summer of 1929 she painted the country around Taos, working directly from nature. "In the evening," she said, "with the sun at your back, that high, sage-covered plain looks like an ocean. The color up there, the blue-green of the sage and the mountains, and the wildflowers, is a different kind of color from anything I'd ever seen. There's nothing like it in Texas or even in Colorado." Much to Mabel Dodge's annoyance, O'Keeffe spent only one summer in Taos. She had discovered the country to the west, the Rio Chama valley near the little village of Alcalde. "It was the shapes of the hills there that fascinated me," she said. "The reddish sand hills with the dark mesas behind them. It seemed as though no matter how far you walked you could never get into those dark hills, although I walked great distances. I've

always liked to walk. I think I've taken a bath in every brook from Abiquiu to Espanola. Irrigation ditches are fine for bathing, too. They're just wide enough to lie down in. I found I could work in a place for two days before anyone bothered me. After two days people would turn up and be curious, and then I'd move on somewhere else; and if I hadn't finished I would come back in a week and spend two more days. I was painting what I saw, as best I could. Sometimes I succeeded, sometimes not."

It may be surmised that O'Keeffe also wanted to keep a certain distance between herself and the Taos art colony. She rather liked Mabel Dodge Luhan -- was amused by her// even when Mabel was at her bullying worst. Mabel and Dorothy Brett, the painter, and Frieda Lawrence, who had settled near Taos after D.H. Lawrence died in 1930, carried on a running, three-cornered feud. They had all idolized Lawrence, and each considered herself in some way his true muse, a situation that reached lunatic heights during their protracted squabble over Lawrence's ashes. To prevent Mabel from stealing and scattering the ashes (as she claimed Lawrence had wished), Frieda finally had them sunk inside a ~~huge~~ huge block of concrete. "Frieda was very special," O'Keeffe recalls. "I can remember ~~her~~ very clearly the first time I ever saw her, standing in a doorway, with her hair all frizzed out, wearing a cheap red calico dress that looked as though she'd just wiped out the frying pan with it. She was not thin, and not young, but there was something radiant and wonderful about her.//

"They were a funny crew over in Taos," O'Keeffe went on. "They'd have terrible fights, and not speak to one another for days. But there weren't that many interesting people around, so sooner or later they would make up. Mabel could be pretty mean, of course. She had the

ability to paralyze a whole room. She would invite a lot of people to her big house, and seat them around in a circle, and they would be so intimidated by her that nobody would say a word. And then the next day Mabel would go on about how everyone in Taos was so stupid. Mabel and Tony Luhan really met their match in each other, I always thought. Tony stayed top of the heap, and he did it through silence. Sometimes he'd get mad at Mabel, and wrap his blanket around him, and say he was going to go to the pueblo. Mabel always worried that he'd decide not to come back. But then, when Mabel went east one summer to have an operation, Tony lay like a log across her bed for days, missing her. They needed each other, no doubt about it.

"One summer Mabel was going away on a trip, and she invited me to come and use her studio. I thought it might be nice to be up there for a few days, so I went, but I only stayed one night. I smelled trouble, and after the first night I left and went over to the Sage Brush Inn in Taos. Well, Mabel did come back early from her trip, and demanded that I come and stay with her. I explained that I couldn't work all day and then be with people in the evening, it just wasn't possible, but I said that if I had a day when I wasn't working I would call and come over. I did call one day, and Mabel said, 'Oh, no, you can't come. Tony's invited the peyote singers here and we have too many people already.' Later that afternoon, Tony came to the Inn to pick me up. I told him what Mabel had said, and Tony came into my room and sat down in a rocking chair in the corner. 'I go to lot of trouble, get peyote singers,' he said. 'She no invite my friend. I not go.' And he didn't. He sat there all evening, rocking in that chair. Mabel was furious."

O'Keeffe and Tony Luhan were great friends. They went on camping trips together, to the Mesa Verde and the Canyon de Chelly and other

places (Mabel had periods of minding and periods of not minding, according to O'Keeffe). Tony even confided to her on occasion his deep feelings about his wife. Mabel, for her part, was a great but rather frustrated admirer of Stieglitz. "She had known Stieglitz long before I did," O'Keeffe says, "and she always wanted to get him out there. He never came. I wouldn't let him. He was such a worrying person -- he had the sort of mind that wouldn't have let me drive five miles to market without worrying." (His anxieties might have been understandable -- around Taos, O'Keeffe's difficulties in learning to drive a car were legendary).

Every fall she returned to New York, and to Stieglitz, who remained "the center" of her life. After Stieglitz's death in 1946, she spent three more winters in New York, settling his estate and dividing his extensive art collection among the Metropolitan Museum, the Chicago Art Institute, and Fisk University in Nashville (a choice influenced in large part by the fact that O'Keeffe's friend Carl Van Vechten had given Fisk his collection of musical manuscripts). Stieglitz had wanted his collection to be kept together in New York, but she had always told him that she thought it should be divided, and he left it to her to do with as she thought right. In 1949 she moved to New Mexico for good.

BLACK ROCK WITH BLUE, III. 1970. Oil on canvas. -- The smooth, rounded rock form fills the canvas, nearly touching the edges at either wide. Black rock, white ground, blue sky -- three simple colored shapes. The painting hangs on the end wall of O'Keeffe's studio in Abiquiu. She bought it back at auction recently because, as she says, "I felt I'd done what I wanted to do in it. I don't always get what I try for, you know."

The Abiquiu house was in ruins when O'Keeffe bought it in 1945. She had had her eye on the plac for years, ever since she drove by in a car one day and saw, through a break in the adobe wall, an enclosed garden and some tumbled-down farm buildings. The man who owned it said he planned to put up a motel there, but that he would sell for six thousand dollars. Too much. A few years later the owner died and left the property to the Catholic church, and O'Keeffe was told she could have it for less, but by this time she was in the process of buying the house at Ghost Ranch. Then the war came, and gas rationing, and only one trip into town a week to buy fresh vegetables, and she began to think again about the walled-in garden at Abiquiu. She bought it, and spent the next three years trying to make it livable. The farm buildings were roofless and crumbling to dust. All available building supplies in the area were still going up to the atomic facility at Los Alamos, and it was almost impossible, she says, to buy a nail. By 1949, though, when she moved west for good, the Abiquiu house was ready.

"I've never wanted to make it look Spanish, or Indian, or anything like that," she told me. "I wanted it to be my house." There is more furniture than at the ranch, but not much. O'Keeffe lives mainly in the studio, a long, white room that used to be the stable, with wide windows overlooking the Rio Chama valley. The best of her innumerable hi-fi systems is in the studio, and the lion's share of her huge record collection, which runs to instrumental music before Bach (Monteverdi is a favorite). Two of her own paintings hang here -- an early abstraction in blue, black, and white and the 1970 "Black Rock." ~~recent canvas in the "black rock" series.~~ The only other work of art in the room is a print by Hiroshige, a snow scene in three panels, which she keeps covered with a cloth against fading.

Large work tables take up one end of the room, with matters of current interest in neat piles all over them -- magazines and books, reproductions, correspondence, a photograph clipped from a newspaper of a Viking ship with an prow that rises to an extraordinary, curling peak. The floor is carpeted in white.

In Abiquiu, O'Keeffe becomes managerial. She confers at length with the cook and with the gardener (the well-irrigated garden provides all the fruit, vegetables, and corn for the table here), answers the telephone (until a few years ago there was no 'phone at the ranch), attends to correspondence. Since her big 1970 retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum there has been an increase in correspondence with museums and galleries that want her to lend paintings, which she does rarely and only under the strictest conditions. Her reputation now is as high or higher than it has ever been, and her prices have always been impressive (in 1927, Stieglitz sold an O'Keeffe flower painting for three thousand dollars and a landscape for six thousand). Doris Bry, who acts as her New York agent, sees to it that O'Keeffe's wishes are carried out in all matters involving sales or loans, and O'Keeffe's wishes are never unclear. According to John Baur, who as director of the Whitney Museum was responsible for the 1970 retrospective, "Dealing with Georgia is very easy provided you do exactly what she wants."

She has contributed generously to her adopted village. Some years ago she ~~adopted~~ established a foundation to help needy children get through high school. She has built a gymnasium for the local school, and has given funds to improve the water system. Except for O'Keeffe and the Catholic priest, the population of Abiquiu is Spanish-American and very poor. "When I first moved here," she said, "the children had nowhere to go when it got dark. They'd play out in the street until sundown, and then

sometimes they would come in here to see me. After a time I took to sending them in my car to their games with other schools. Once a week I sent them to the movies in Espanola. The buys used to talk a lot about having a gymnasium, and eventually I had a gymnasium built. Now those same boys are grown up and have five or six children of their own. So you see, without knowing I was doing it I really bought my way into this village." A man who knows and likes O'Keeffe and who lives in another Spanish-American village some distance away insisted years ago on giving her two large and aggressive chows for protection. She came to adore the dogs but has never felt any need for their protective qualities. "I find the Spanish-American people very gentle and immensely polite," she says. "Not at all like the Germans in Wisconsin where I grew up."

The sitting room at Abiquiu is fairly luxurious by O'Keeffe's standards. There are three comfortable chairs, a built-in adobe bench with cushions, and a glass-topped table that she likes because, as she says, it "looks as though it almost didn't exist." The end window faces the garden, and its wide sill holds some of the choicest rocks from her collection. On a low table against the wall are art books that people have sent her, and a small oil by Arthur Dove, an abstraction called "Golden Sunlight." Her own "Sky Above Clouds," one of the series that grew out of her travels by jet plane, fills the wall at the far end. A delicate, black Calder mobile hangs near the fireplace. It is a cool night in late September, cool enough for a fire in the rounded, hivelike little fireplace where the pinon logs stand up on end and are ignited by pinon shavings.

"I think Dove came to abstraction quite naturally," O'Keeffe says, reflectively. "It was his way of thinking. Kandinsky was very showy about it, but

Dove had an earthy, simple quality that led directly to abstraction. I loved his things. I always wished I'd bought more of them. And all the people Dove influenced, who are better known now than he is. The Museum of Modern Art never gave him a show -- I don't know why. Dove used to paint a lot of small pictures, little landscapes, that didn't look particularly distinguished at first, but in them he would get the feel of a particular place so completely that you'd know you'd been there."

O'Keeffe has often said that she does not much like pictures. When she travels, as she has done extensively since Stieglitz's death, she spends little time in museums or galleries. The heights of Macchu Picchu, the Lippizan horses of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, the ruins of Angkor Wat -- these are the sort of things she goes to see, and she is never disappointed. "But I destroy pictures for myself," she said, with an amused smile. "I'm very critical. I don't seem to have the kind of pleasure I know a lot of other people have in pictures. That's why I think maybe something was the matter with me when I went to the Prado in 1953, because everything there was so exciting to me. Maybe the fact that the pictures had not been cleaned had something to do with it.

"It's funny to me that I enjoy Goya so much," she went on, after a moment. "One of the first things I ever bought was a reproduction of a Goya in the Metropolitan -- I hope it's still considered a Goya -- a portrait of a man in knee britches. Goya seems so foreign to me, and yet I enjoy him as much as any occidental artist. His prints, a lot of them anyway, show some pretty terrible things, and I'm usually squeamish about that, but not the way Goya does it. Of course," she added, "my favorite is Chinese painting. I'd still say

it's the best that's been done."

She got up to put some more wood on the fire. When she was in her thirties, she said, she was troubled with arthritis, but it had disappeared years ago; she thought the secret was in keeping warm enough. "Now I haven't a creak. I suppose that's remarkable." ~~Her only trouble is something she does not talk about.~~

The conversation turned to the number of letters she gets these days from young artists and would-be artists who want to see her and show her their work. O'Keeffe does not believe in giving advice. "Go home and work," she said. "That's all I could tell anyone. You can't help people that way. I think one of my best times was when nobody was interested in me. ~~Exhibit is~~ That may have come from not being the favorite child in the family and not minding that I wasn't -- it left me very free. My older brother was a favorite, and I can remember comparing myself to him and feeling I could do better. In my case I never cared anything at all what other people thought. I always knew I could earn a living doing something else besides painting, so I wasn't worried. I could just do what I wanted to do, and I didn't have to care what people thought. Oh, if I'd followed people's advice, it would have been hopeless. That man Dement gave me some very good advice. He told me things to see and do, and he was ~~really~~ very helpful. But if I'd really done in painting what he wanted me to do, nobody would ever have thought anything about me.

"The truth is I've been very lucky. Stieglitz was the most interesting center of energy in the art world, when I was trying to find my way. To have him get interested in me was a very good thing. My going to Texas was lucky, and of course my finding this place. And

then somehow, what I did happened to fit into the emotional life of my time -- does that sound right to you? Often I've had the feeling that I could have been a much better painter and had far less recognition. It's just that what I do seems to move people, sometimes, in a way that I don't understand at all. Now and then when I get an idea for a picture, I think, 'How ordinary. Why paint that old rock? Why not go for a walk instead?' But then I realize that to someone else it may not seem ordinary."

O'Keeffe was silent for a time, gazing at the bare adobe wall beyond the fireplace. "I just think," she said, "that some people are very lucky."

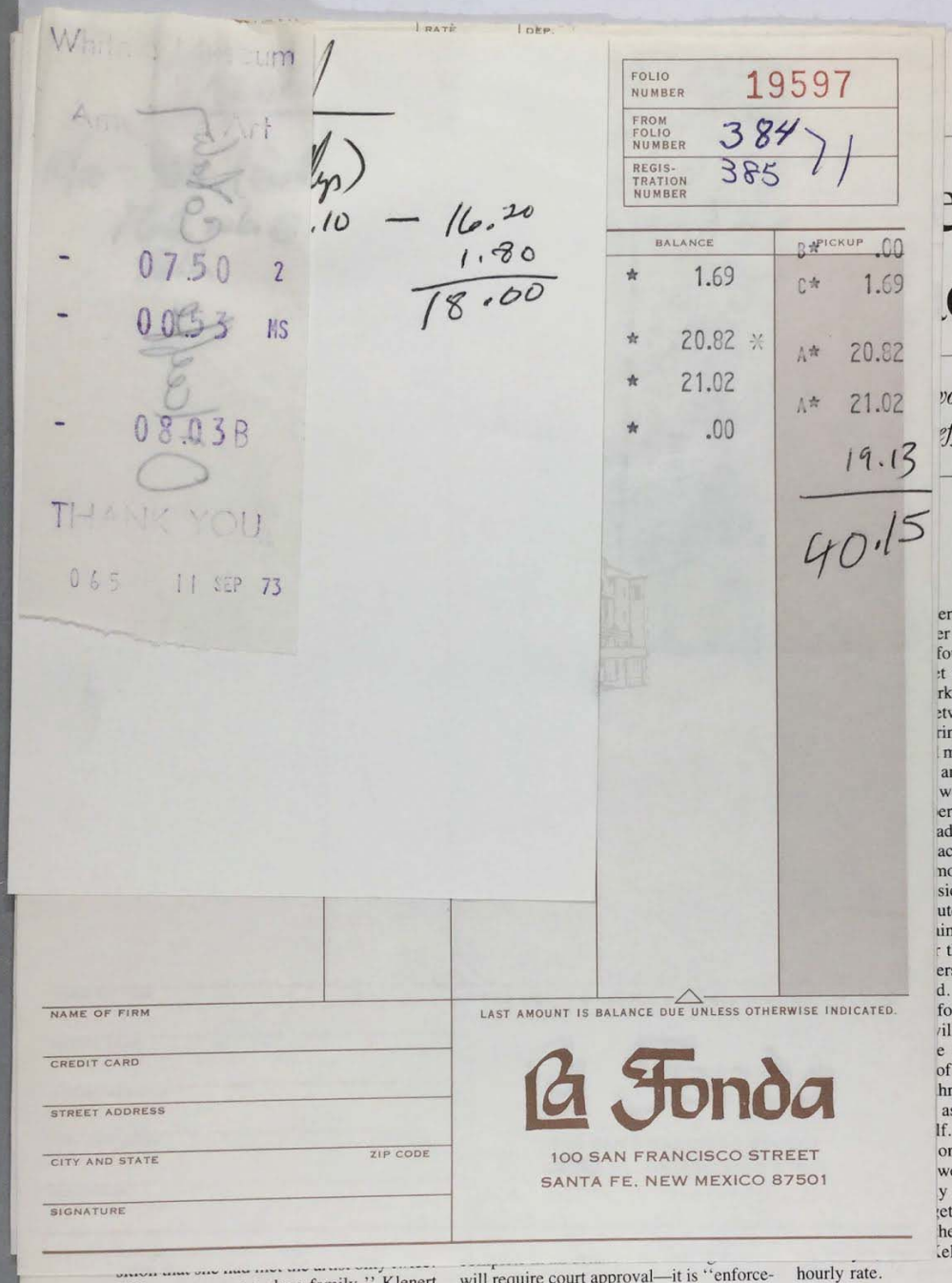
- Calvin Tomkins

October 29, 1973

Expenses - O'Keeffe profile

Hotel, Santa Fe, 2 nights	40.15
O'Keeffe Catalog , Whitney show	8.00
10/10/73 trip to New Haven, 162 miles plus tolls	18.00
Stieglitz book	7.50
	$ 73.65

Calvin Tomkins



FOLIO NUMBER 19597
FROM FOLIO NUMBER 384
REGISTRATION NUMBER 385

BALANCE	PICKUP
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18.00 — 16.20 + 1.80

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STREET ADDRESS
CITY AND STATE ZIP CODE
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La Fonda
100 SAN FRANCISCO STREET
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501

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Travel

O'Keeffe Catalog

FOLIO NUMBER 19597

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385

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Travel

10/10 - Yale (Gallup)
162 miles @ .10 — 16.20
Tolls 1.80
18.00

FOLIO NUMBER 19597
FROM FOLIO NUMBER 384 71
REGISTRATION NUMBER 385

BALANCE	PICKUP
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NAME OF FIRM
CREDIT CARD
STREET ADDRESS
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ROOM NO. | NAME | RATE | DEP.

344 | Thompkins, Carlin | 18- | 9/27

CITY: Palisades, N.M. | NO. IN PARTY: 1 | ARR.: 9/26

STREET ADDRESS: Sweedes Landis

REPRESENTING

CLERK: P.W.

FOLIO NUMBER: 19597

FROM FOLIO NUMBER: 384 71

REGISTRATION NUMBER: 385

DATE	REFERENCE	CHARGES	CREDITS	BALANCE
SEP 26	LDIST 344	B* 1.69		* 1.69
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SEP 27	PHONE 344	A* .20		* 21.02
SEP 27	PAID 344		* 21.02	* .00

B* PICKUP .00
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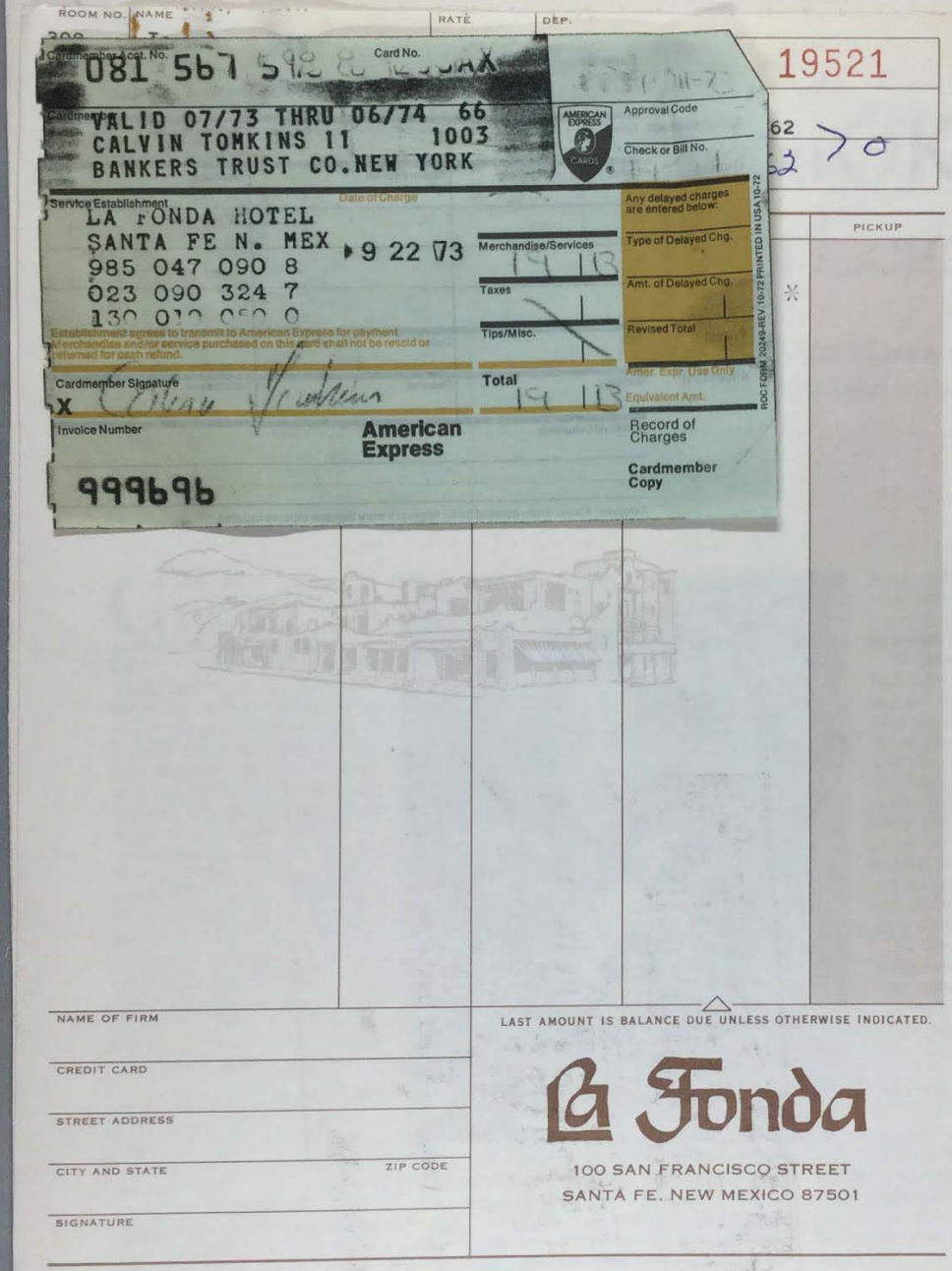

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Merchandise/Services 19 13

Taxes

Tips/Misc.

Total 19 13

Any delayed charges are entered below:

Type of Delayed Chg.

Amt. of Delayed Chg.

Revised Total

Amer. Expr. Use Only

Equivalent Amt.

Record of Charges

Establishment agrees to transmit to American Express for payment Merchandise and/or service purchased on this card shall not be resold or returned for cash refund.

Cardmember Signature X [signature]

Invoice Number 999696

American Express

Cardmember Copy

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La Fonda

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ROOM NO. 308 | NAME TOMRIM, CALIN | RATE 18 | DEP. 9-24

CITY PALISADES, NEW YORK | NO. IN PARTY 1 | ARR. 9-23

STREET ADDRESS SNEDENS LANDING

REPRESENTING | CLERK P. W.

FOLIO NUMBER 19521

FROM FOLIO NUMBER 562

REGISTRATION NUMBER 562

DATE	REFERENCE	CHARGES	CREDITS	BALANCE	PICKUP
SEP 23	ROOM 308	C* 18.00			
SEP 23	TAX 308	C* 1.13		* 19.13 *	

NAME OF FIRM

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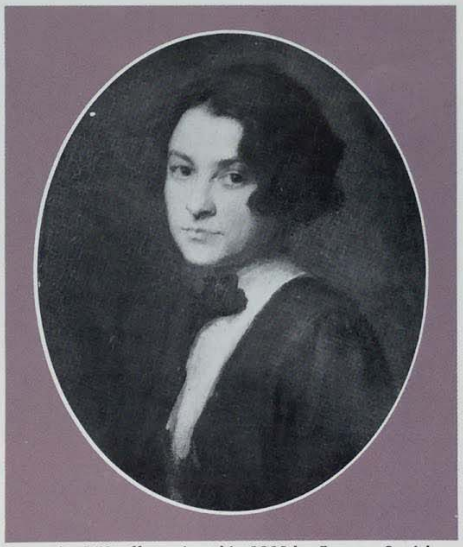
BY ANDREW DECKER

The Battle over Georgia O'Keeffe's Multimillion-Dollar Legacy

After a ten-month legal conflict involving charges of greed and undue influence, two of the artist's relatives and her longtime aide and companion have agreed to rewrite O'Keeffe's will

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE devoted her life to distilling in form and color the essence of the world she saw. It is hard to imagine the forms she would have given the battle over her estate, which was valued by one of the contestant's lawyers at between $45 million and $60 million. Another appraiser, a prominent dealer, says the works by O'Keeffe alone in the estate have a market value of $65 million.

The dispute, which never went to trial, began in April 1986, a month after O'Keeffe died in Santa Fe at age 98, and ended in late January, when the contestants reached a binding preliminary agreement over how the estate would be disbursed. It pitted O'Keeffe's relatives, who had not been named in her will or the two codicils to it, against her companion and aide, Juan Hamilton, whom she had designated as executor of her estate and its principal beneficiary. The family members are Catherine Klenert, O'Keeffe's 92-year-old sister, and a niece, June O'Keeffe Sebring, the daughter of O'Keeffe's late brother Alexius. Sebring stated in a deposition that she had met the artist only twice. "We were never a close family," Klenert once said.



ART STUDENTS LEAGUE

Georgia O'Keeffe, painted in 1908 by Eugene Speicher, a classmate at the Art Students League in New York.

Also affected by the settlement were eight major museums O'Keeffe had named as beneficiaries. Four of those museums had requested to be kept abreast of developments in the case. In another settlement, between Hamilton and New Mexico state officials, Hamilton agreed to give $750,000 worth of artworks to the Museum of New Mexico/Museum of Fine Arts and the University of New Mexico in lieu of state estate taxes. Both institutions had been beneficiaries under the original will. The state also agreed not to contest the second codicil, which had excluded it from the estate.

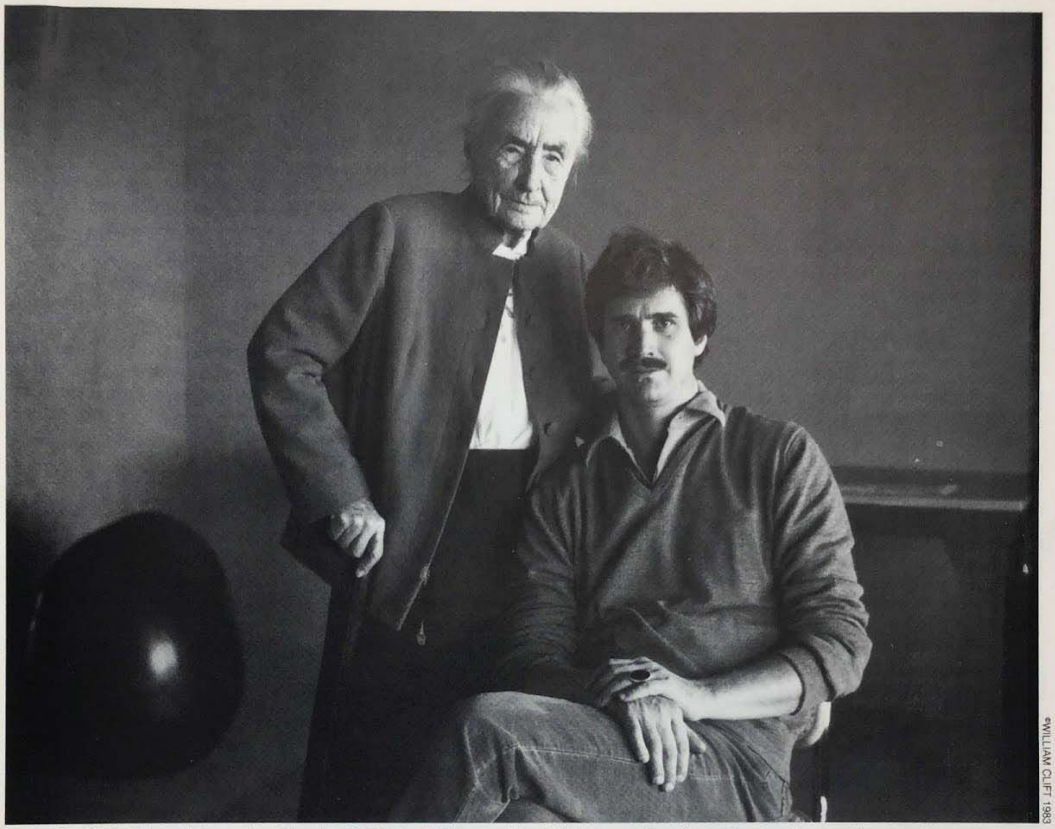
Although the agreement is not final, or complete in all details—the final agreement will require court approval—it is "enforceable," according to an attorney representing one of the family members.

Under the agreement, just over 40 major O'Keeffe works—including five paintings from the "Jack in the Pulpit" series—will be distributed to the eight museums. The bulk of the remaining estate, including artworks and real estate (or the proceeds from their sale), will be distributed to nonprofit institutions. A foundation will be established to oversee the distribution; its board of trustees will consist of Hamilton, Sebring, Klenert's grandson Raymond Krueger and two people with museum or foundation experience who have yet to be selected.

The artworks not distributed will be divided between Hamilton, Klenert and Sebring. Hamilton will receive several million dollars' worth of art plus an executor's fee of $70,000, as well as real estate and literary property, according to one source who added that the two relatives will each receive $1 million in art or money—a remarkable amount considering that throughout the dispute they, or their lawyers, had claimed they did not want anything for themselves.

The laywers will be handsomely compensated. According to one source, the four firms representing the family will receive $1.8 million if the judge approves the settlement. One of the lawyers is Krueger, who, through his Milwaukee firm, acted as co-counsel on Klenert's behalf. The four firms took on the case on a contingency basis, under which they were to calculate their fees at a high hourly rate if they were successful but would get nothing if the claims were dismissed by the court. Hamilton paid his lawyer, Paul Kelly, at a standard flat hourly rate.

Prior to the settlement, Klenert and Sebring had charged that Hamilton was an opportunist who took advantage of O'Keeffe's dependency in her old age to the point that his will and needs predominated over hers. He unduly influenced O'Keeffe, the relatives' court papers claimed. Hamilton, on the other hand, says that his friendship with O'Keeffe was "the most important thing in my life." He believes that Sebring was motivated by greed and says that the driving force behind Kle-



©WILLIAM CLIFT 1983

Georgia O'Keeffe and Juan Hamilton in 1983. Their 14-year friendship, says Hamilton, "seemed to be the most important thing in my life, certainly the most influential."

nert is Krueger. In a telephone interview, Klenert was vague about why she was contesting the will and codicils; she said first that her sister knew her own mind in 1985 and then questioned whether she was sane in 1984 when she named Hamilton principal beneficiary of her estate.

THE KEY PAPERS IN THE CONtest over the estate are a 1978 power of attorney, the 1979 will and the 1983 and 1984 codicils, which amended the will. In the power of attorney, O'Keeffe made Hamilton responsible for virtually all her business affairs—negotiating agreements, collecting debts, filing suits, managing her accounts, buying and selling real and personal property, hiring and firing attorneys and handling charitable donations. The last sentence reads, "This power of attorney shall not be affected by my subsequent disability or incompetence."

O'Keeffe's last will, dated August 22, 1979, provided for the distribution of her estate, which then included over 100 oil paintings and over 100 works on paper, real estate, literary property, cash and liquid investments, works by her late husband, Alfred Stieglitz, and personal effects.

O'Keeffe provided guidelines for distributing much of the estate, but she left many of the decisions to her executor. She named Hamilton executor, if he qualified. His fee was 21 works of art by O'Keeffe: five oil paintings that he could choose from over 50 that were not committed to specific institutions and 16 works in other mediums. If Hamilton did not qualify as executor, then Gerald Dickler, O'Keeffe's longtime New York attorney, would act as executor and receive $200,000 as his fee.

The remaining property was to go to three sources: Hamilton, institutions to be named by the executor, and museums O'Keeffe had specified. Hamilton says that O'Keeffe wanted her important works to wind up in major institutions. The will designates eight museums to receive 52 of her better known, or "poster-image," works, as National Gallery of Art 20th-century curator Jack Cowart terms them. The National Gallery itself was to receive ten (until now, the gallery has had only one work by O'Keeffe). The Art Institute of Chicago and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts would receive nine each, the Brooklyn Museum six, the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art five each, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art four each. All of the works were oils except for two pastels. By her death in 1986, however, she had sold about ten of those works, leaving just over 40 to be distributed. The executor was to have the right of redirection: he or she could give any of the works named as going to specific institutions to any other charitable organization.

A number of Stieglitz's photographs of O'Keeffe had been on loan to the National Gallery, and those were left in Washington. She donated all her "letters, personal correspondence and clippings" to Yale University, to which she had previously given papers from the Stieglitz estate.

O'Keeffe's own works that were not named in the will were to be distributed to various institutions at the executor's discretion. The only stipulation was that the University of New Mexico and the Museum of New Mexico/Museum of Fine Arts should receive unspecified property.

The property in the remaining estate, including works by artists other than herself, was to go to charities named by the executor. Any of it could be sold and the proceeds donated to charitable institutions.

The Abiquiu home was bequeathed to the National Parks Service or to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Hamilton was also named a beneficiary. He received her house on land adjoining the Ghost Ranch Conference Center, a Presbyterian retreat. Along with the property came all the furnishings and the kiln, as well as all personal property, including her books, dogs and cars. Further, she gave Hamilton the remainder of her writings and papers—those that did not go to Yale University—"together with all copyrights thereon and rights of publication thereto." She also left him the copyright and royalties from her book, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, which was published by Viking Press in 1976.

Nearly four and a half years later, on November 2, 1983, O'Keeffe modified her will for the first time. The adjustments were minor. First, she no longer left her Abiquiu home to a national group for designation as a monument. Hamilton says that O'Keeffe realized people in Abiquiu felt that an influx of sightseers would change the quality of the small village. The second change gave to Hamilton outright the 21 works he would have received as executor's fee and also provided that as executor he would receive $200,000 in fees.

The second codicil, dated November 8, 1984, changed the shape of O'Keeffe's bequests drastically and increased Hamilton's share in the estate from about ten to about 70 percent, according to Charles Olmsted, co-counsel for Klenert. The bequests to the eight named museums were made unalterable: the executor no longer had the right to redesignate the gifts. However, Hamilton now received not only the Ghost Ranch property, the 21 works, the $200,000 executor's fee, O'Keeffe's personal property and rights from her Viking book, but the entire residuary estate as well. Apart from the specific bequests to the eight museums, only the gifts of the Stieglitz photographs of O'Keeffe to the National Gallery and of her papers to Yale remained intact. Hamilton's share of the estate would have come to over $40 million.

At O'Keeffe's death, her cash and investments totaled close to $2 million, according to one source; other assets included her two houses, appraised at about $675,000, personal property (including her two chow dogs) valued at $500,000, three cars (all Mercedeses) valued at $63,000 and her collection of works by other artists. O'Keeffe's own art—over 100 oils and over 100 works in other mediums, including over 20 sculptures—was appraised by New York dealer Eugene V. Thaw at $16,275,825 after a blockage discount, a reduction allowed by the Internal Revenue Service on the assumption that if a large number of an artist's works are placed on the market simultaneously, their value will decline. The landmark case that established the discount involved sculptor David Smith's estate, and in that case the IRS allowed a discount of 37 percent. Thaw's appraisal provided a discount of 75 percent, from a retail figure of $65,130,300.

THE DAY AFTER O'KEEFFE DIED —March 7, 1986, a Friday—Robert P. Worcester, a lawyer with O'Keeffe's Santa Fe firm, Montgomery & Andrews, signed a petition for formal probate of her 1979 will. It was filed with the court the following Monday, March 10. The case was heard by New Mexico District Court Judge Patricio Serna—an artist himself—who gave interviews to the press during the preliminary proceedings, revealed that a settlement was being sought and at one point told *ARTnews* that the estate was worth perhaps "as much as a billion dollars" if television, film and literary rights were considered. Three weeks after the petition was filed, Serna named Hamilton the "informally appointed Personal Representative of the Estate of Georgia O'Keeffe . . . in an unsupervised administration."

That day, Sebring, Klenert—O'Keeffe's sole surviving sibling—Klenert's daughter Denise Catherine Krueger and Krueger's son, attorney Raymond Krueger, all notified the court that they would contest the two codicils. On the same day, the state-run Museum of New Mexico/Museum of Fine Arts and the University of New Mexico came to an agreement with Hamilton concerning artworks the state would receive. According to an affidavit filed by New Mexico assistant attorney general Carolyn Wolf, the agreement provided that Hamilton, as executor, would give the state $1.5 million worth of O'Keeffe's works. In return, the state accepted the works in lieu of state estate taxes (New Mexico is one of the few states that allow this) and agreed not to contest the 1984 codicil, in which it was written out of the will. Although the 1979 will specified that both the museum and the university should receive artworks, it did not specify which artworks they should receive or what their aggregate value should be. Hamilton made the agreement with representatives of the state, including Toney Anaya, then governor of New Mexico, and Paul Bardacke, then attorney general. Both Jerry Wertheim, Sebring's attorney, and Charles Olmsted later criticized the settlement. Wertheim said that the state was foolish to accept so little art, and Olmsted faulted the state for not contesting the codicil. Bardacke defended the agreement, saying it represented the state's best interests.

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

O'Keeffe in 1918, in one of the many photographs of her taken by her husband, Alfred Stieglitz.

Unlike the state, O'Keeffe's family was developing its case against Hamilton. Santa Fe attorney Curtis W. Schwartz also filed on behalf of Sebring, claiming that O'Keeffe had come to rely so heavily on Hamilton—whom she supported financially—that he was able to exercise "such undue influence on the decedent" when the 1979 will was signed that the will expressed Hamilton's intent, not O'Keeffe's. Further, he claimed that Hamilton had "participated in procuring the purported will dated August 22, 1979," and the two codicils. O'Keeffe's "mental capacity . . . began to deteriorate approximately three to four years prior to her death," he wrote, and he added that Hamilton was aware of that fact and abused her trust.

Schwartz proceeded to ask for a jury trial and, in the event his client won, for rulings that O'Keeffe had died intestate, that the codicils were bogus and that Hamilton was "unsuitable" to act as executor.

Beginning with their initial April 30 filing, the Klenert and Krueger family con-

sistently objected to the codicils, claiming, as Sebring had, that O'Keeffe "was unduly influenced and subject to duress prior to and at the time she executed" them. They also claimed that O'Keeffe may have "lacked testamentary intent or capacity" when she signed the codicils, and they charged that O'Keeffe wanted her works to go to charities, not to Hamilton. Although Serna later ruled that neither of the Kruegers had standing in the case, their claims continued to be presented by Klenert.

The family also sought the appointment of an independent guardian to review Hamilton's handling of O'Keeffe's affairs, as well as legal costs and a postponement of any court decision on the estate until a guardian had been appointed. They also asked that another personal representative be appointed to administer the estate along with Hamilton.

At one point, Wertheim questioned whether O'Keeffe, who by 1979 had lost her central vision and was unable to read, had even read or known of the contents of the will and the codicils. An associate of Wertheim's, John Wentworth, went so far as to imply that Hamilton may have had a motive—ongoing financial need—to increase his share in the estate. During a deposition of psychiatrist Donald Fineberg, who, Wentworth suggested, had acted as Hamilton's counselor, Wentworth asked whether Dr. Fineberg had ever "treated or diagnosed any type of mental or emotional condition, including drug addiction," for Hamilton or his wife; the psychiatrist repeatedly declined to say whether Hamilton was or ever had been a patient of his, much less whether any treatment involved drug addiction.

Hamilton's attorney at the time, Seth D. Montgomery (whose firm subsequently withdrew from the case, since some of its members who were involved in preparing the 1984 codicil might be called to testify), denied the charges of undue influence and asked that the request for appointment of a guardian and a trustee be rejected. He claimed that O'Keeffe gave Hamilton the 1978 power of attorney and the property from her estate because "she loved and respected him." He noted that the late Claudia O'Keeffe, O'Keeffe's youngest sister and the family member to whom she was closest, had written in a letter that Hamilton not only provided invaluable services for O'Keeffe but also helped enliven the artist's last years. Montgomery continued, "Juan Hamilton was not some Svengali or Rasputin in handyman's clothes but one of the closest and most helpful and important persons in Georgia O'Keeffe's 98 years of life."

Hamilton himself dismisses all of the allegations brought against him. He says that he could never have gotten O'Keeffe to do anything she didn't want to do and adds, "She wanted me to develop. She wanted my career to develop. She was interested in my family. Miss O'Keeffe got excellent and superb care and she was very comfortable and very happy."

Concerning her inability to read the will and codicils she signed, Hamilton says, "You could say therefore that a blind person doesn't have a right to execute a will." He says that he was not present at the signing of any of the documents, but that the will and first codicil were witnessed by Oliver Seth, a lawyer of O'Keeffe's for over 20 years who is now a federal district judge in New Mexico. (Seth would not comment on the procedures.) Hamilton says, "I find it hard to believe that the family would feel that [Seth] would partake in a conspiracy against Miss O'Keeffe. It was my understanding that he read the will to her at length."

Hamilton also challenges Klenert's and Sebring's assertion that O'Keeffe wanted to give her property to charitable institutions. "There's an attempt now to canonize Miss O'Keeffe as a selfless person who lived to give to charities. She was very generous with the Stieglitz estate and his photographs," he says, but "if Miss O'Keeffe had been so interested in leaving her estate to institutions she could have done so during her lifetime." Hamilton added that not all the works in the estate are great works, and that O'Keeffe had been interested in having her better paintings before the public. "It may sound egocentric of me to say this, but Miss O'Keeffe trusted me in the distribution of her work, and I believe very strongly that she trusted me to continue to do that after her death."

Before the settlement, Charles Olmsted, co-counsel for Klenert, said that greed was the least factor in Klenert's suit, pointing out that she had not asked for anything from the estate for herself. Sebring's lawyer, Jerry Wertheim, said that Sebring was also not asking for anything of substance, although she did claim that O'Keeffe wanted her relatives "to have something"—an assertion Wertheim describes as simply a legal maneuver. In an early motion, however, Sebring had asked that the court reject the 1979 will and codicils and rule that O'Keeffe died intestate. If the judge had approved her motion, Sebring, with Klenert, would have become heir to O'Keeffe's assets, although, Wertheim said, they never intended "to ask the judge to set aside the entire will." As for Sebring's not being close to O'Keeffe, Wertheim said, "If you haven't seen her in years, should you let someone make off with the property and not participate when you're sure something is wrong?"

HAMILTON, 42, LIVES IN SANTA Fe and Abiquiu; he married Anna Marie Prohoroff, an artist, in 1979 and has two children. He claims he is being vilified and that his life is no longer his own. In a series of interviews with *ARTnews* in Santa Fe and in New York, he said that O'Keeffe's relatives had demanded information about his assets dating back several years, about how he cared for O'Keeffe, about what services he provided her and about his personal life. "I think you can imagine," he says, "how you'd feel if someone were prying into everything about your life."

More than that, he says, he is distressed that relatives for whom he claims O'Keeffe had more tolerance than affection are now asserting that the will and codicils do not represent her true intentions. He speaks of them alternately with perplexity and anger, wondering why they would bring an action he feels is indefensible. "I was *trained* by Miss O'Keeffe for 14 years to understand what she wanted and how she wanted her business handled," he says.

Hamilton's first meeting with O'Keeffe was not auspicious. "I started working with Miss O'Keeffe in August of '73," he says. "I was at the Ghost Ranch Conference Center for about seven months doing odd jobs, and I was interested in meeting Miss O'Keeffe. One of the heads of maintenance was doing some work on Miss O'Keeffe's plumbing and asked if I'd help him. She said hello to him and acknowledged him and totally ignored me. Later, Miss O'Keeffe called Jim Hall [director of the Ghost Ranch] and asked him to help her install a Franklin stove. He knew I was interested in meeting her and I went with him. He said, 'This is Juan Hamilton. He's from Vermont and had an antique wood-burning stove,' and Miss O'Keeffe turned around and said, 'This isn't an antique wood stove.'

"I was about to give up, and someone suggested I just go over early one morning. I went over at seven in the morning and knocked on the door. The cook, Candelaria Lopez, answered, and Miss O'Keeffe came to the screen door and I asked her if she had any work. She said she didn't, and I thanked her and turned to walk away and she said, 'Can you help me pack a shipping crate?' I said I thought I could. I ended up being there for 14 years."

Hamilton is about six feet tall, with a medium build. His given name is John, but he uses the name Juan. His parents taught English in South America before moving to New York City in 1960, and he says he was called "Juan" until the family returned to the United States. He began to use the name again in 1969. His manner blends earnestness and sincerity with what one friend calls arrogance. He can be mercurial, at one moment talking seriously and intently about O'Keeffe and at the next sliding into harsh comments about her relatives, who, in his opinion, contested her will and codicils out of greed. He expresses his anger through irony, questioning the relatives' seemingly pure motives and interest in the estate and wondering why, if they were so concerned about O'Keeffe's state of mind, health and well-being, they had only distant relationships with her when

she was alive. Most of all, he is disgusted that they are trying to debase a profound friendship.

Hamilton describes this friendship as progressing in stages. At first, he did odd jobs for O'Keeffe. A few weeks after he had begun helping around the house, she asked him if he had gone to high school. He answered that he had graduated from college with a degree in studio art, had studied art on the graduate level for one semester at Claremont College in California and had lived in Vermont, where he had worked as a potter. O'Keeffe then asked if he could type. While he says that his typing was, and is, execrable, he gave her a qualified "yes." He then became her man Friday.

Early in this period, he would read her mail to her and she would dictate responses. He also read her articles from magazines—he says she was particularly interested in the Watergate investigation—and began learning about her life and work, as well as Stieglitz's. His time was also taken up by "the logistics of basically running two households in a rural area. I think that's where I was able to be of assistance to her on a practical level, but it was just as important as the Stieglitz correspondence or museum correspondence."

Hamilton lived in the area, in a rented house. He spent between eight and 12 hours at O'Keeffe's house each day, six days a week. After he had been there several months, he says, O'Keeffe suggested he work on his pottery. "She said, 'Well, if you're going to stay around here, you'd better start making pots.' She felt that if I didn't have something of my own I would only last a short while with her." He began working with clay, and O'Keeffe bought a kiln. With Hamilton's encouragement, O'Keeffe herself became interested in pottery. Hamilton says that she wasn't especially good with clay but that she persisted and eventually made 30 or 40 pots.

A year or so after he started working for her, Hamilton accompanied O'Keeffe on a trip to Africa—the first of several trips. Her sight was failing—he says she suffered from macular degeneration of the retina, which affected her central vision—but she could see peripherally and still liked to travel. More important, he says, she liked being active.

At the time Hamilton met O'Keeffe, she was working on *Georgia O'Keeffe*, an oversize book of her works, with Virginia Robinson, a writer in New Mexico. Hamilton started to become involved in this project on Christmas day, 1973. "I apologized to Miss O'Keeffe. I said, 'I haven't gotten you a Christmas present,' and she said, 'As a Christmas present, I want you to read my manuscript.' "

O'Keeffe alternated between reading the manuscript herself with a magnifying glass and having Hamilton read her sections. "We would go over what she had written, work on it, rework it, and Mrs. Robinson, even though she was old, would come up and work on it too. [The question of] who would be involved with the publisher was a sore point." Hamilton became increasingly involved, to the growing exclusion of Robinson. "My role gradually expanded to the point that when there was a contract to be drafted between Miss O'Keeffe and Viking, Miss O'Keeffe had me go to New York and participate in the meetings with Viking Press." By 1975 he was working on the book's production along with O'Keeffe.

"Miss O'Keeffe trusted me to slowly become her eyes from the work I did with the photographer—getting to know the paintings and the original proofs that she sent out and that I had worked on," he says. "It was the first of many steps that expanded my world, my knowledge, and that was really like an apprenticeship—but even more so in that Miss O'Keeffe would express to me what her interests were and I would act as her emissary, I would act as her liaison and I would be her eyes, so to speak."

Hamilton became even more involved with O'Keeffe after her falling-out with Doris Bry, who had lived in New York but had worked for O'Keeffe for 30 years and, since the 1960s, had been her dealer. O'Keeffe ended the relationship in 1977, and the rupture led to two lawsuits, one filed by O'Keeffe against Bry that year and another filed by Bry against Hamilton in 1978. Both suits were settled out of court, the latter in 1982 and the former in 1985. None of the parties would comment on the suits.

In her suit against Hamilton, Bry charged him with undue influence. In her November 3, 1978, summons to Hamilton—served on him during the opening of his first solo show in New York, at the Robert Miller Gallery—Bry accused him of malicious interference in her relationship with O'Keeffe. She also alleged that O'Keeffe, "dependent upon Hamilton because of her poor vision and advanced age, came under Hamilton's influence and control" and that Hamilton used that control to "poison" Bry's relationship with both O'Keeffe and the art community. She asked for compensation and damages amounting to $13.25 million.

By the time the case ended with a financial settlement, Hamilton had assumed Bry's responsibilities. In 1979 he started working with O'Keeffe on the 1983 exhibition of Stieglitz works at the National Gallery. They worked primarily with curator Sarah Greenough, who recalls that she had started cataloguing and indexing the 1,600 photographs at the gallery and had proposed that the gallery exhibit the works. "It was really Juan and I who did most of the work. O'Keeffe was in the background making suggestions."

Greenough says that O'Keeffe came to the gallery several times between 1979 and 1982, when the exhibition was being prepared. Although O'Keeffe's sight deteriorated during that period and she had increasingly less energy (in 1982 she turned 95), she was still spirited and alert. Greenough adds that she didn't notice that O'Keeffe's sight was especially poor when they first met in 1976 or 1977, before she was working on the exhibition, but that "by the '80s she couldn't see very well. But she would sometimes see when she wanted to see. She could look at a photograph and without either Juan or I saying which image of the hundreds it was, she would know which one it was."

Hamilton also worked with O'Keeffe on other projects, including casting bronze sculptures from plaster molds that she had made years earlier. He encouraged her to give permission for the Metropolitan Museum of Art to exhibit Stieglitz's photographs of her and urged her to grant interviews and to promote her book.

O'Keeffe not only started making pottery after Hamilton arrived, she also started painting and drawing again, after having abandoned both in 1972. In the late '70s, she started working in watercolor and, following a trip to Washington, D.C., decided to do a painting of the Washington Monument against the sky. This work, entitled *From a Day with Juan No. III*, is still in the estate. It shows a section of the monument against a sky of graded colors. O'Keeffe made some pastel sketches of the subject but, Hamilton says, was having trouble with the edges of the monument; unable to complete the work as she wanted, Hamilton says, she "started having other people paint for her." One of those who helped O'Keeffe with the painting, John Poling, told the *Santa Fe Reporter* that he had actually created some of O'Keeffe's paintings. "There was a great controversy about that," Hamilton recalls. "For Miss O'Keeffe to be berated for making a daring effort in her later years to continue to paint, even with her limitations, is very much like saying Matisse's cutout figures, which he supervised from his bed, pointing with a stick and telling people what to do, are not his work. These are not Miss O'Keeffe's greatest works, but certainly they were her greatest effort." He adds, "Miss O'Keeffe was quoted exactly on how she felt about it. And her comment about Poling, which is a classic, is that 'he was nothing but a palette knife.' "

Much of his time with O'Keeffe, Hamilton says, was spent taking care of the two New Mexico houses and, often, talking about her life. "She'd tell me about the difficulties she had growing up, not being accepted—she said her mother thought she was an ugly baby and would hide her when people came over. . . . And she talked about her friendships in school and the fact that she was called Patsy O'Keeffe, she wasn't Georgia—and finally, being able to

please her art teacher and being able to please everyone but herself, coming to the time where just before 1910 she decided to stop painting.

"So I became acquainted with her world, and I was free," Hamilton continues. "I was single. I was starting my life over again. I had time and she had work. We began a friendship that seemed to be the most important thing in my life, certainly the most influential." He terms the relationship a "kind of a strange reversal. Stieglitz was 25 years older than she was, and when she came into Stieglitz's world there were a lot of people that got their feathers ruffled, a lot of artists to whom Stieglitz was like a father."

After Hamilton had been working for O'Keeffe for a while, there began to be rumors that they were married. Neither Hamilton nor O'Keeffe denied the rumors initially, though they both did later. Hamilton says that the rumors were upsetting, but that she was reassuring, telling him, "Just don't pay any attention to it. What do you care?" He adds, "She herself was able to focus on her interest, and she wouldn't get caught up in what other people were saying. She'd say there's always a lot of talk.

"It was a mutually beneficial relationship," Hamilton continues. "We had a lot of mutual interests and worked as a team. Any good relationship is based on mutual benefit." He says that O'Keeffe often praised his pottery, rarely being critical. "And then I mentioned an exhibition and she laughed at me. She said, 'You have some very nice things, but you don't have a body of work.' She could be extremely encouraging, but she could also deflate you, cut the legs right out from under you."

Virginia Adams, Ansel Adams' widow, whom O'Keeffe and the Hamiltons visited in the early 1980s, said that Hamilton seemed to care very much for O'Keeffe and treated her very well. Several people, including longtime friends of O'Keeffe's, say that Hamilton served O'Keeffe not only as a companion and business manager; after he married and had children, he provided her with the family that she had never had. All say that O'Keeffe was devoted to Hamilton, and that he cared for her enormously.

With regard to their business relationship, several museum directors and curators, among them Thomas Armstrong and Patterson Sims of the Whitney Museum of American Art, Tracy Atkinson of the Wadsworth Atheneum, Jack Cowart of the National Gallery of Art and James Wood of the Art Institute of Chicago, say that Hamilton seemed to act consistently in O'Keeffe's best interests, pricing sales on her behalf in such a way that the museums were able to afford her works and arranging for exhibitions of her and Stieglitz's works so that the art would be well presented to the public.

HAMILTON'S STORY CAN, HOWever, be told another way and, like the case brought against him and his relationship with O'Keeffe, it is multilayered. He recalled to *ARTnews* just prior to the settlement, as he did for newspapers in the late '70s, that he had once had a fantasy about meeting O'Keeffe while driving near Lake George, where Stieglitz and O'Keeffe had spent many summers. At that time, which he describes as the low point in his life, Hamilton was recently divorced and living with his parents in New York. He says he imagined going to New Mexico and becoming friends with O'Keeffe; he imagined giving her one of his pots. As it turned out, his parents soon arranged for him to get work at the Ghost Ranch, and he moved to New Mexico.

ROGER'S OF KAILUA

June O'Keeffe Sebring, the artist's niece, was one of two relatives who contested her will.

Although Hamilton says his move was primarily a "sabbatical," his admission that he moved there in the hope of meeting O'Keeffe could be seen as calculated, and such an admission—naive, given its timing—could have been damaging in a trial.

After the trip to Africa, O'Keeffe's housekeeper and cook, Jerrie Newsom, presented the artist with an ultimatum: either Hamilton would leave or she would. Newsom had been with O'Keeffe for some time, and in 1973 O'Keeffe had told Calvin Tomkins of *The New Yorker* that Newsom "keeps me alive." Hamilton says that O'Keeffe told Newsom she was welcome to stay, but that she wasn't going to fire Hamilton. Newsom quit. *ARTnews* was unable to locate Newsom. Hamilton says she was unhappy about his increasingly prominent position in the household.

Hamilton grew rich working for O'Keeffe. Aside from his salary, he received commissions on sales. He handled the sale of *Sky Above Clouds IV*, bought by the Art Institute of Chicago in the early 1980s for $1 million, and of *Summer Days*, which he sold to Calvin Klein, also in the early 1980s, for $1 million. (O'Keeffe made one of the conditions of the sale that Klein make the work available to the Whitney, which had expressed an interest in it, for part of each year, and that Klein eventually either give or leave the painting to the museum.) Hamilton sold *The Lawrence Tree* (1929) to the Wadsworth Atheneum for between $325,000 and $350,000, according to Atkinson, and *Abstraction, Flower* (1924) and *Black and White* (1930) to the Whitney; while Patterson Sims, the director of paintings at the Whitney, says that O'Keeffe made the works "affordable," O'Keeffe never sold her paintings cheaply.

The market in O'Keeffe's works has always been strong, and since her 1970 retrospective at the Whitney, her works have done well at auction. Between 1970 and 1980, only 27 of her oils were sold at auction, according to Richard Hislop's *Art Sales Index*. In 1974 *Poppies* sold for $120,000, then an auction record for an American artist's work. Jeffrey Bergen, vice president of A.C.A. Galleries in New York, says that he recently sold *Blue Hills of Pedernal*, a work roughly 20 by 24 inches, for a little over $600,000, and that good O'Keeffe oils that are larger than 20 by 24 sell for $400,000 to $750,000. Exceptional works have sold for over $1 million: *White Rose, New Mexico*, which was sold in 1985, brought $1,265,000, an auction record for the artist. Bergen added that watercolors sell for $35,000 to over $100,000, and small oils for as little as $50,000.

Hamilton's creative career also benefited. He had his first New York solo show at the Robert Miller Gallery in November 1978; Miller, who acknowledges that he started handling O'Keeffe's works on commission at about the same time, says that the timing came about because he first met O'Keeffe in 1976 and met Hamilton shortly after. While he is aware of allegations that he would not have shown Hamilton's works but for the promise of handling O'Keeffe's, he says, "I couldn't show art in my gallery—and we don't show art in this gallery—that we don't find interesting." He says that not only do Hamilton's works sell,

TODD WEBB

O'Keeffe first visited New Mexico in 1929 and was captivated by its majestic terrain. "I never feel at home in the East like I do here," she wrote.

but that some of his works are in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Hamilton also started showing at the Gerald Peters Gallery in Santa Fe at about the same time that Peters started handling O'Keeffe's works. And there were other material benefits from the relationship. There was the Santa Fe property she acquired in 1984, which Hamilton says he purchased at her instructions from Gerald Peters' company, the Peters Corporation, for an undisclosed sum, when her health became so frail that she needed to be near her Santa Fe doctors. Under an agreement O'Keeffe signed that year, Hamilton became the owner of the 20-acre property while O'Keeffe retained lifetime use. Neither Gerald Peters nor Hamilton would comment on the price.

As for charges of undue influence, Hamilton himself openly discusses a rumor that went around the Santa Fe household concerning her August 1984 signing of the second codicil. He says that some members of the household staff believed for a brief period that O'Keeffe had thought she was signing a marriage contract with him (he had married in 1979) instead of a document that would give him two thirds of her estate. Hamilton attributes the idea to a series of circumstances that were interpreted by a member of the staff—who, he says, had an overactive imagination and was nursing a grudge—as a ceremony: O'Keeffe had been dressed in white, as she usually was in summer, and Anna Marie Hamilton, Hamilton's wife, had put fresh-cut flowers around the house, as she often did.

One source who knew O'Keeffe at the time recalls that O'Keeffe had visited her sister Anita (who has since died) in Florida in the spring of 1984. While there, O'Keeffe suffered heart problems that her cardiologist, Dr. Brad Stamm, says required hospitalization but were easily treated. The source says that O'Keeffe, on her return, "was like a different person—she became very quiet, very complacent. It could have been age, it could have been illness, it could have been that she was no longer in Abiquiu." Oliver Seth, who Hamilton says visited O'Keeffe the day she signed the second codicil, says that O'Keeffe at the time tired more easily than she had but that she was still alert and vital, and Stamm says that at the time O'Keeffe "was asking why she was taking certain medications and what she could and couldn't do while on them."

The source also contends that Hamilton at that point was paying far less attention to O'Keeffe than he had earlier. Hamilton says that at that point he was spending as much as eight hours a day, five days a week, attending to her, though his own work and family, as well as O'Keeffe's affairs, also made demands on his time.

If there are two versions of Juan Hamilton's attachment to Georgia O'Keeffe, there is also another dimension to the whole story: O'Keeffe herself, a notoriously strong-willed person. Aline Porter and her husband, the photographer and writer Eliot Porter, were old friends of both O'Keeffe and Stieglitz; Aline remarks that "Georgia could be pretty tough on people. She was a person who liked to get her own way, and if you were a friend of hers you accepted that. I think it would have been pretty hard to push her around."

Klenert recalls that at one time she herself started painting in a style similar to O'Keeffe's. She says that O'Keeffe wrote to her (in the 1920s, according to Doris Bry) and asked her to stop painting because O'Keeffe felt that Klenert's work "was getting to look too much like hers." Asked if her work was good, Klenert says, "It was good enough for *that*." She adds that the paintings were selling. Asked if Stieglitz might have put O'Keeffe up to asking her to stop painting, Klenert says, "Oh, you couldn't put Georgie up to anything. She had very strong ideas about everything."

Klenert says she did stop painting in deference to her sister, and that the incident led to a four-year break in their relationship—the only serious fight they ever had. Although she now talks about it good-naturedly, she says that at the time she was

extremely angry. "I thought she might help me a little, but no go." Many years later, during a visit with O'Keeffe, she says her sister said, " 'Well, Catherine, don't you want to start to paint now? I'll give you the paint, the equipment, and you go out and paint where you want to.' I said, 'No, you spoiled my painting.' "

O'Keeffe broke off her relationships with people close to her throughout her life. Her rupture with Bry was preceded by a break with dealer Edith Halpert, who had represented her from Stieglitz's death through the 1960s. A friend of Halpert's, who asked not to be identified, says O'Keeffe "fought very bitterly with Edith Halpert. They split up in the '60s when O'Keeffe accused her of not getting enough for the pictures. It was true that she got less money selling them to museums than if she had sold them to individuals, but the works were being placed in museums here and abroad." He says that at that point O'Keeffe was more concerned about the prices obtained for her works than about where they went.

Hamilton says, "People that are very creative are often also very destructive. I think it was true for Stieglitz, I think it was true for Miss O'Keeffe, and in more mundane ways, it's true for people in general."

A friend of O'Keeffe's who witnessed the disintegration of some of the artist's friendships over the years says, "She could be vindictive, diabolical, mean and petty," although that was only a part of her. "She was willing to deal with people, but she wanted to deal with them on her own terms." So far as these terms concerned Hamilton, he may have been getting a great deal from O'Keeffe in personal and artistic development, salary and commissions, but she, in turn, was receiving the attention of an interesting and complex man. (O'Keeffe once said she liked "difficult men.") Starting with the kiln, another source says, O'Keeffe presented enticements that would have made it difficult for Hamilton to leave, even if he had wanted to.

FURTHER QUESTIONS HAVE ARISEN about the sale before the artist's death of some of the works O'Keeffe had named in her will as destined for various museums. Three of the nine paintings the Art Institute of Chicago was to receive were sold: the museum itself bought her 8-by-24-foot *Sky Above Clouds IV*. James Wood, director of the institute, says that he and former curator James Speyer (now deceased) pursued the acquisition themselves. He says that he was aware that O'Keeffe was selling some of her works and both he and Speyer were keenly interested in acquiring this one. Hamilton says that O'Keeffe valued the picture at $2 million but sold it to them for $1 million; he adds that O'Keeffe wanted the work in a museum, and that if it was to be so placed during her lifetime she was determined to see that the institute pay for the work.

COURTESY SOTHEBY'S NEW YORK

***White Rose, New Mexico*, 1930, oil on canvas, 30 by 36 inches, was sold at Sotheby's in 1985 for $1,265,000, an auction record for the artist.**

The Lawrence Tree, which O'Keeffe had designated as going to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, was sold to the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1981. Cowart says that two of the ten works the National Gallery was to receive were sold before O'Keeffe's death, but he notes that even after she wrote her will she retained the right to dispose of any of her works as she saw fit.

Although the sales were questioned before the settlement, they are now accepted. More of O'Keeffe's works will be distributed to museums and institutions, and they will be doled out by three people who have been exchanging vitriolic charges for nearly a year. It is hardly an arrangement anyone would have thought likely two years ago. Krueger, who is 39 years old and lives in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin, declined to comment on the proposed foundation. Before the settlement Hamilton said that if he became heir to the better part of her estate, he "would proceed with Miss O'Keeffe's work the way I did during her lifetime—distribute it in an orderly fashion, make loans to institutions, work on publications, as she did with the Stieglitz estate." First, however, the details of the agreement must be worked out and estate taxes must be paid on the property that will go to the contestants.

The settlement came about, according to sources, for several reasons. Klenert's Sante Fe lawyer, Olmsted, said Hamilton agreed to settle to avoid the airing of "dirty linen." Olmsted declined to elaborate. Another source familiar with the legal proceedings, however, says the family made a tactical mistake in asking for an independent guardian for the estate. The source says that the guardian could have decided to exclude the family from the estate; therefore once Hamilton had made substantial offers of money or O'Keeffe's works to the family, as well as agreeing to a foundation that would distribute the residuary estate to nonprofit institutions, Sebring and Klenert were happy to drop their case.

The settlement left unanswered both the question of what constitutes undue influence and the question of what O'Keeffe wanted. In New Mexico, case law favors contestants to wills when undue influence is alleged. In a landmark case, *Jim Thorp v. Don Cash*, the state's appeals court ruled, "Generally undue influence is not proven directly, but is inferred from the circumstances," including whether a fiduciary relationship existed between the deceased and the beneficiary and whether the deceased was "old and in a weakened physical or mental condition." Hamilton held power of attorney and O'Keeffe was unquestionably old, but unlike Thorp, who was bequeathed a $1 million ranch after working for an elderly woman for a mere eight months and who lost his case, Hamilton had worked for O'Keeffe for nearly 14 years. Dr. Stamm says, "Sure there was influence. There was bound to be influence. Hamilton was a longtime confidant." He says, however, that the influence was based on trust that was never betrayed. As for the question of whether an aged person can change his or her will and be assured that it will be held valid after his or her death, that was answered in a settlement that O'Keeffe never called for. ■

Andrew Decker is a contributing editor of ARTnews.

Friend of O'Keeffe Glad Fight's Over

By GRACE GLUECK

Juan Hamilton, the potter who was the longtime friend and companion of Georgia O'Keeffe, said yesterday that he was relieved at the settlement of the court battle over the painter's $70 million estate. "We're in the process of doing a centennial O'Keeffe exhibition, to open at the National Gallery in Washington this November," he said. "It would be disheartening to celebrate her work and her contributions to American culture while at the same time this sideshow was going on in the courts."

Two suits, brought separately by two O'Keeffe relatives, charged that Mr. Hamilton had exerted "undue influence" over the ailing artist, who died on March 6, 1986, at the age of 98. The settlement last week replaces him as the recipient of her residuary estate, estimated to be worth $47.2 million — largely in works of art by Miss O'Keeffe and photographs by her husband, Alfred Stieglitz — and sets up a foundation to receive and administer it. It also returns to the estate the proceeds from a house in Santa Fe bought by Miss O'Keeffe in 1984 for $2.6 million and deeded to Mr. Hamilton. He had assumed the mortgage payments on it and sold it last June for $2.1 million. Miss O'Keeffe spent her last days at the house with him, his wife and two children.

But Mr. Hamilton will keep such legacies as Miss O'Keeffe's own home in Ghost Ranch, N.M.; more than two dozen works of art by her and other artists; her papers and the copyrights she held, along with much of her personal property. Her correspondence will go to Yale University.

"I'm very glad it's been accomplished after only a year and a half of litigation," said the 41-year-old Mr. Hamilton, who met Miss O'Keeffe in 1973 and settled into her home as caretaker, confidant, aide and business manager until her death. "Many artists' estates have been tied up for years in the courts, and while Miss O'Keeffe was alive we spent a good deal of time in litigation ourselves." The artist and Mr. Hamilton were sued in 1978 by her longtime agent, Doris Bry, who challenged Miss O'Keeffe's dismissal of her and charged that it was a result of Mr. Hamilton's "malicious interference." The suits were resolved by confidential agreements.

The two relatives who contested the artist's 1979 will and two codicils — Miss O'Keeffe's sister, Catherine Klenert of Portage, Wis., and her niece June O'Keeffe Sebring of Kailua, Hawaii — were each given cash and O'Keeffe works worth $1 million. The settlement left standing a longtime O'Keeffe bequest whereby 42 of her most prized paintings, selected by the artist herself and said to be worth nearly $20 million, will be divided among eight major American museums, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Brooklyn Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art.

Foundation to Distribute Art

Miss O'Keeffe's winter home in Abiquiu, 16 miles south of her summer residence at Ghost Ranch, will become headquarters for the foundation, whose purpose is to distribute the works of art in her residuary estate. The foundation's board will consist of two O'Keeffe relatives, Mr. Hamilton, and two outside members, one to be chosen by Mr. Hamilton, the other by the O'Keeffe relatives.

Lawyers for both of the relatives said they and their clients were pleased with the settlement. "We felt that Miss O'Keeffe was unduly influenced and that her testamentary capacity was diminished when she made a 1984 codicil to her will, giving Hamilton the residuary estate," said Jerry Wertheim of Santa Fe, who represented Mrs. Sebring. "June's primary objective was to see that the art in the estate went to public institutions. That purpose has been accomplished, and we feel good about it."

Mr. Hamilton, who was given power of attorney by Miss O'Keeffe in 1978, said charges that he had exercised "undue influence" on her were "completely untrue."

Among the accomplishments he counted in working with the artist were his help with a monograph on her art that was published in 1976 and in the preparation of shows and catalogues on the work of her husband at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Gallery. He also said he felt his efforts had contributed to the rise in prices for her paintings over the last decade. "No one can take credit for controlling the market," he said, "but we raised prices as much as we could and we were very successful, I think."

WASHINGTON, DC
WASHINGTON TIMES
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WASHINGTON D.C. METROPOLITAN AREA

MAR 7 1986

Georgia O'Keeffe

G. O'Keeffe, 98, painter of Western forms

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Georgia O'Keeffe, 98, whose colorful abstracts and clearly defined paintings of flowers and bones made her a leading figure in contemporary American art, died yesterday in St. Vincent Hospital.

Miss O'Keeffe's art "is an individual one, expressing personal emotions and perceptions in a style that combines strength and crystalline clarity," wrote Lloyd Goodrich, former director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, when the museum organized a retrospective of Miss O'Keeffe's work in 1970.

Miss O'Keeffe received the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in 1977, and was one of the first recipients of the National Medal of the Arts.

Her best-known paintings were of flowers and skyscapes or landscapes. She often used natural objects as her subjects: a pelvic bone outlined against the sky; rocks or bleached animal skulls against the blues, purples, reds and flesh tones of the desert.

"I have picked flowers where I found them — have picked up sea shells and rocks and pieces of wood. . . . 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," she wrote in her 1976 autobiography "Georgia O'Keeffe."

She also did many abstracts, "a kind of counterpoint to the precise, stripped-down realism of her more familiar work," Calvin Tomkins wrote, in a 1974 New Yorker profile.

She was born in Sun Prairie, Wis., the second of seven farm-family children. Her family moved to Williamsburg, Va., in 1902 and she was sent to boarding school at Chatham (Va.) Episcopal Institute. She next entered the Art Institute of Chicago but withdrew after becoming ill with typhoid fever in the summer of 1906. In 1907, she entered the Art Students League in New York City.

She did not paint for four years and went to Chicago to work as a commercial designer. Deciding to try teaching, she enrolled in 1912 in an art class taught by Alon Bement at the University of Virginia. Mr. Bement was a disciple of Arthur Wesley Dow, the head of the fine arts faculty at Columbia University, with whom Miss O'Keeffe subsequently studied.

In the fall of 1912, Miss O'Keeffe became an art teacher in the Amarillo, Texas, public schools, and later was head of the art department at the predecessor of West Texas State University in Canyon.

She wrote in her autobiography that in the fall of 1915, while teaching at Columbia (S.C.) College, "I first had the idea that what I had been taught was of little value to me except for the use of my materials as a language — charcoal, pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, pastel and oil."

After careful thought, she said, "I decided that I wasn't going to spend my life doing what already had been done. I decided to start anew — to strip away what I had been taught, to accept as true my own thinking. That was one of the best times of my life."

She sent some of her drawings to a friend, telling her to keep them private. The friend promptly took them to famed photographer Alfred Stieglitz, who hung them in his New York gallery without her permission.

Miss O'Keeffe went to see him, determined to make him take them down.

He persuaded her to let them remain, and the next year, 1917, he gave Miss O'Keeffe her first one-woman show. He also offered to pay her living expenses for a year so she would devote herself to painting.

She resigned her teaching job in Texas in 1918 and moved to New York, where she became a member of Mr. Stieglitz' inner circle of artists and the subject of hundreds of his photographs. She and the 61-year-old photographer were married in 1924; he died in 1946.

Miss O'Keeffe's long love affair with New Mexico began in 1929.

In 1936, she established her home at Ghost Ranch in the Chama River Valley and in 1945 bought property in the nearby village of Abiquiu.

She continued to work well into old age, rising at dawn and growing much of her own food.

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MAR 7 1986

Famed American artist Georgia O'Keeffe dies at 98

Continued from Page 1A.

New Mexico."

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"I have picked flowers where I found them — have picked up sea shells and rocks and pieces of wood. . . . 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," Miss O'Keeffe wrote in *Georgia O'Keeffe*, published by Viking Press in 1976. She also did many abstracts.

Fort Worth's Amon Carter Museum owns seven works by Miss O'Keeffe, the most of any Texas museum. The McNay Art Museum in San Antonio owns three; the Dallas Museum of Art one. Area collectors Mrs. Ruth Carter Stevenson of Fort Worth, Dallas' Margaret (Mrs. Eugene) McDermott and Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Boeckman also acquired her works.

The Texas art community remembers Miss O'Keeffe as a brilliant talent and a formidable person.

Associated Press

Georgia O'Keeffe stands near two of her paintings at New York's Whitney Museum of Art in 1970. At left is *Cross by the Sea*. At right, *Deer's Skull with Pedernal*.

"It was Arthur Dow who affected my start, who helped me find something of my own. The man had one dominating idea: to fill a space in a beautiful way," she said in later years.

In the fall of 1912, Miss O'Keeffe took a job as an art teacher in the Amarillo, Texas, public schools, and later she became head of the art department at the Normal School, now West Texas State University, in Canyon.

She wrote in her autobiography that in the fall of 1915, "I first had the idea that what I had been taught was of little value to me except for the use of my materials as a language — charcoal, pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, pastel and oil."

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Miss O'Keeffe's long love affair with New Mexico began in 1929, when she visited Mabel Dodge Luhan, a wealthy Taos woman who was a prominent patron of the arts. She stayed in Taos one summer and then moved down the Rio Grande Valley to the small community of Alcalde.

In 1936, she established her home at Ghost Ranch in the Chama River Valley and in 1945 bought property in the nearby village of Abiquiu.

For many years, Miss O'Keeffe lived in New Mexico during the spring and summer and returned to New York in the fall. Three years after Stieglitz's death in 1946, she moved permanently to New Mexico. Her home in Abiquiu was restored from an ancient ruin that was part old Indian pueblo, part stock shed and part crumbling adobe house.

She continued to work well into old age, rising at dawn and growing much of her own food, and in later years tried to master the art of pottery. Those years were marred by charges that a relative of Stieglitz illegally authorized the manufacture of O'Keeffe lithographs, and a handyman's claims that he actually executed three paintings under her direction.

In 1980, Miss O'Keeffe agreed to an arrangement for her Abiquiu home to be donated upon her death to the National Park Service. Congress subsequently gave the house a historic designation which authorized the Park Service to turn the property into a national historic site after her death.

A report to the Senate subcommittee said "the buildings, their immediate surroundings and the view they command of the Chama Valley all combine to provide a dramatic insight into the physical environment of an artist deemed one of the most original talents America has ever possessed in painting."

In 1983, Miss O'Keeffe changed her mind about making the house a gift to the government, basically because of the fear of her neighbors in Abiquiu that they would be inundated by tourists. At her request, Sen. Pete V. Domenici introduced a bill to rescind congressional approval of the gift.

Staff writer Mary Catherine Bounds, art critic Janet Kutner and The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Contemporary artist Georgia O'Keeffe dies

From Staff and Wire Reports

SANTA FE, N.M. — Georgia O'Keeffe, whose colorful abstracts and clearly defined paintings of flowers and bones made her a leading figure in contemporary American art, died Thursday. She was 98.

Miss O'Keeffe was brought to St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe in mid-morning and died at 12:20 p.m., hospital spokesman Charles Cullen said. He had no other details on her death.

She moved to Santa Fe last summer from Abiquiu, N.M.

"Of all the shows I've seen, the most moving experience has been that of walking into a room of O'Keeffes, because they are so powerful," said Patrick Stewart, curator of American art at the Dallas Museum of Art.

"It's the kind of work that makes you feel at a loss for words. She and Edward Hopper had the greatest and most timeless vision of the American landscape and the American can visual experience."

"She didn't copy anybody," said Aline Porter, wife of renowned nature photographer Elliott Porter. The Porters were close friends of Miss O'Keeffe for more than 40 years. "Her paintings were very strong. . . . They had the feeling of the outdoors, the space and light of

Please see FAMED on Page 4A.

Georgia O'Keeffe

The Amon Carter's late founding director, Mitchell A. Wilder, first met Miss O'Keeffe in the 1930s and in 1966 mounted an important retrospective of her work. He and his widow, Sally Wilder, stayed for two weeks with Miss O'Keeffe at her home during the planning of that show.

"She was an incredibly wonderful woman who really had it all together," Sally Wilder said. "She was assertive and knew what she wanted and went after it."

Mrs. Wilder says that Miss O'Keeffe walked into the Carter Museum, took one look at the brown walls, and said, "O'Keeffe looks better on white."

"So our dear janitor, Jim Thompson, had to put white paper over all the walls," Mrs. Wilder said.

The DMA's O'Keeffe painting, *Bear Tree Trunks with Snow* (1946), was acquired under director Jerry Bywaters in 1953. Bywaters recalls an unexpected visit by Miss O'Keeffe when he and staff members were installing a small show of her work.

"We were in the middle of taking some impossibly dirty glass off two of her pictures when suddenly a presence with a big hat darkened the front door. I could almost feel it even before I turned around . . . It was O'Keeffe with her hand raised, saying to me, 'Young man, you know I do not permit the glass to be removed from a painting under any circumstances.'

"I said, 'Yes, I do, and I'm stopping it right this minute," Bywaters said.

Stewart spent an afternoon with Miss O'Keeffe's companion, Juan Hamilton, in Santa Fe last fall.

"At that point she had been moved to Santa Fe and was bedridden," Stewart says. "You heard word off and on that she was quite ill, and I always thought it sad that at the end she was legally blind after a lifetime of seeing so well.

"I tried to think of anyone left of the generation that came to artistic maturity when she did — that heroic Stieglitz (Miss O'Keeffe's husband was photographer Alfred Stieglitz) period — and I can't think of a soul," he said.

Miss O'Keeffe's will should determine the disposition of her paintings, Stewart said.

Miss O'Keeffe was born Nov. 15, 1887, in Sun Prairie, Wis., the second of seven children in a farm family. The family moved to Williamsburg, Va., in 1902 and she was sent to boarding school at Chatham Episcopal Institute in Chatham, Va.

After graduation, she entered the Art Institute of Chicago but withdrew after she contracted typhoid fever in the summer of 1906. In 1907, she entered the Art Students League in New York City.

"There was never any question about her talent. But the slick, academic imitations of European styles then being taught at the League by William M. Chase, Kenyon Cox and others soon lost all interest for her," wrote Calvin Tomkins in a *New Yorker* profile in 1974.

She did not paint for four years and went to Chicago to work as a commercial designer. Deciding to try teaching, she enrolled in 1912 in an art class taught by Alon Bement at the University of Virginia. Bement was a disciple of Arthur Wesley Dow, the head of the fine arts faculty at Columbia University. Miss O'Keeffe subsequently studied with Dow.

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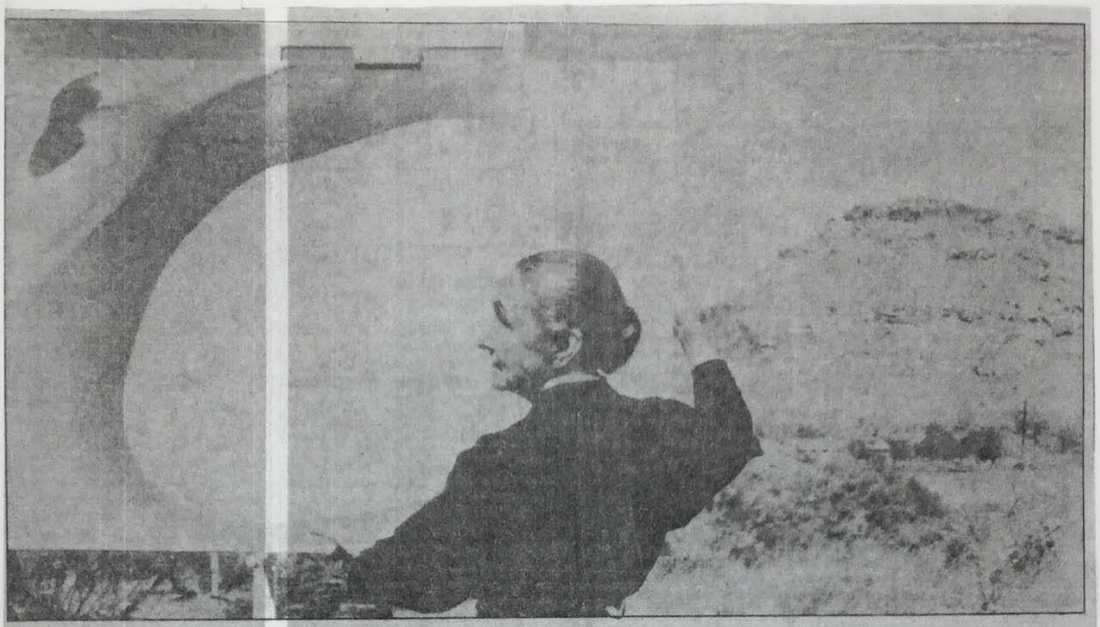


Wisconsin-born Georgia O'Keeffe lived in New York early in her career, but New Mexico became home and inspiration.

O'Keeffe: An American original

Pioneering artist painted her beloved desert to the end

BY AMEI WALLACH
Newsday

Georgia O'Keeffe was 12 when she first asserted adamantly and out of the blue that she was going to be an artist. Even then there was that crystal clarity about this child of the prairie. It was a kind of purity. The photographer Alfred Stieglitz, whom she married in 1924 when she was 37 and he was 60, called it a "whiteness." Georgia O'Keeffe always seemed to do exactly what she wanted to do. Exactly what she needed to do. No compromises.

In school, it was taking long walks alone and refusing to repeat her French lesson three times. In art, it was throwing over all the old murky rules and starting all over again in her late 20s, with charcoal and a single line.

As a woman, it was living without shame or question for six years with Stieglitz before they were married, and then, when it seemed necessary 14 years later, leaving him every summer because she needed her New Mexico to paint.

She looked the part, this spare, upright woman with the structural face, the less-is-more figure, the sailor's far-seeing eyes, and her clothes, which were always black or white until the last years, when a very young man introduced color into her life. O'Keeffe died Thursday in Santa Fe at the age of 98.

In her 90th year, she said that in the next life she would be reincarnated as a blonde with a high soprano voice. "I would sing very high, very clear notes," she said, "without fear."

'She is unafraid'

If she was fearful in the life she lived, she seldom showed it. "The outstanding fact is that she is unafraid," the critic Henry McBride wrote of one of her first shows of paintings in 1922.

The result is that Georgia O'Keeffe was one of the most eloquent and original painters that this country has ever produced.

She painted what she saw and as she lived,

O'Keeffe at 31, by Alfred Stieglitz.

of an Artist, Laurie Lisle summed it up: "As she matured, her healthy ego—necessary to her early attempts to draw in her own way—was exaggerated into a brand of narcissism that is not unusual in an artist, and perhaps is even essential." And then she quoted a friend of O'Keeffe's: "Considering that she is a genius, she is a remarkably fine and honest person with shortcomings as we all have."

She was born on Tuesday, Nov. 15, 1887, to Ida and Francis O'Keeffe in their farmhouse in Sun Prairie, Wis. Her first memory was of the brightness of light, she recounted in her much-heralded autobiography of painting, *Georgia O'Keeffe* in 1976. She would listen to her mother read her brother stories of Kit Carson and dream of the desert.

Dismayed by academicism

tionized photography, making an art form of the infant technique. At his gallery, he was introducing avant-garde art to America and championing a circle of home-grown avant-garde artists, which eventually would include, in addition to O'Keeffe, John Marin, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, Charles Demuth and the photographer Paul Strand.

O'Keeffe had visited his gallery before, but their first meaningful meeting took place after she learned, quite by accident, he was exhibiting her drawings without so much as asking her.

She rushed to the gallery to learn Stieglitz was on jury duty. Two days later she confronted him and asked him to take the drawings down. He did most of the talking, in his mesmerizing, volcanic way. The drawings stayed up.

From the first, people saw a sexual content in the drawings.

"Even many advanced art lovers felt a distinct moral shiver," wrote critic McBride later. "And, incidentally, it was one of the first great triumphs for abstract art, since everybody got it."

Stieglitz began photographing O'Keeffe—her face, her hands, her neck, her entire body, nude, clothed, and some of each. The erotic force of the pictures—like a caress—was wholly apparent when Stieglitz showed the photographs in 1921.

Big, bright flowers

After a time, O'Keeffe began painting flowers—huge closeups cropped in the ways the young photographers were cropping. They were brightly colored flowers at a time when it was fashionable to paint with a muted palette. They were commanding and enveloping. When they were first shown in 1925, reviewer Edmund Wilson wrote that she had outshone the male artists around her.

Both she and Stieglitz hated to part with her paintings, selling them only when they absolutely had to have the money, and then only to purchasers who met with Stieglitz' perfectionistic approval. One way to avoid selling was to

She painted what she saw and as she lived, vithout embellishment, stripped down.

She painted essences: the way the sky looks hrough a skull bone, the details of light on a eaf, the hard-edged perpendiculars of the city nd the undulating layers of a flower.

People were forever reading things into her aintings. They said the flowers were sensual, eminine and sexual. They said the bones were ymbols of death.

It infuriated her.

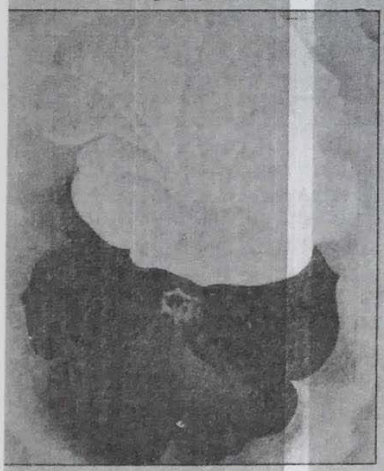
"When people read erotic symbols into my aintings," she finally said, "they're really alking about their own affairs." And, "The ones do not symbolize death to me. It never ccurs to me that they have anything to do ith death. They're very lively."

But that didn't stop people from seeing what ney wanted in her art and in her life. Against er will she became a symbol of the feminist ovement and a standard bearer for people oking for a way out of their own frustrations.

There was a price to pay for her daring and er certainty.

An early classmate remembered O'Keeffe as insatiable . . . as direct as an arrow, and ugely independent." By the end of her life ose qualities had petrified into a hardheaded tubbornness that made one frustrated muse-m curator exclaim, "Dealing with Georgia is ery easy, provided you do exactly what she ants."

In her 1980 biography of O'Keeffe, *Portrait*



ntitled (purple and white petunias).

Dismayed by academicism

When O'Keeffe began studying art (first at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1905, followed by a year at the Art Student's League in New York), American art was in a vapid academic state, with emphasis on a warmed-over rehash of European traditions. O'Keeffe herself found it so disastrous that from 1908 to 1912—from the age of 21 to 25—she gave up painting altogether.

She started again when she was teaching art in the Amarillo, Texas, public schools, in that arid landscape of her childhood dreams.

Three years later, while teaching at Columbia College in Columbia, S.C., she locked herself into her studio one October day. She pinned up all the watercolors and drawings she had been making, decided she had done one to please this professor; another that. And she put them away.

It was a turning point.

Seven years later she would recall what she decided that day:

"I can't live where I want to, I can't go where I want to, I can't do what I want to, I can't even say what I want to. School and things that painters have taught me even keep me from painting what I want to. I decided I was a very stupid fool not to at least paint as I wanted to. . . . "

After that, as she wrote in her book, "I decided to start anew—to strip away what I had been taught—to accept as true my own thinking. This was one of the best times of my life."

For O'Keeffe, starting anew meant limiting herself to one color: black. It meant restricting herself to absolute necessities: one or two lines. And it meant saying everything she had to say within those limitations. Finally she introduced a rich blue and in 1916 produced, "Blue Lines," slender, elegant and uncompromising as O'Keeffe herself.

She sent the drawings to her friend Anita Pollitzer in New York, forbidding her to show them to anyone. But Pollitzer remembered how O'Keeffe had once written her, "I believe I would rather have Stieglitz like something—anything I had done—than anyone else I know of. . . . " And Pollitzer took the drawings to Stieglitz' gallery, 291, at 291 Fifth Ave., and showed them to him.

O'Keeffe, far from angry at the breach, wrote Stieglitz asking why he had liked her drawings. That was the first of the 3,400 letters and telegrams the two were to exchange in their lives.

By the time they met, Stieglitz had revolu-

purchasers who met with Stieglitz' perfectionistic approval. One way to avoid selling was to ask for outrageous prices.

In 1928, he asked a Frenchman for $25,000 for six small paintings of calla lilies—and got it. The newspapers called her the "Lindbergh of art" for the rare feat of sending American art to France instead of the other way around.

The following year, she departed from the schedule that she and her husband had observed throughout their time together—winter in New York City; summer at Lake George, surrounded by the family and friends and frenzy so necessary to Stieglitz.

There was too much green at Lake George, O'Keeffe decided, and she headed alone to the red cliffs of New Mexico to paint. The next few years were painful and difficult ones, with the marriage strained, Stieglitz aging and ill. Seldom did she miss her summers in New Mexico, however, and her new iconography of crosses and bones grew.

In 1949, three years after Stieglitz died, O'Keeffe moved fulltime to New Mexico and stayed there until her death Thursday.

In 1970 the Whitney Museum mounted an exhibit of paintings by O'Keeffe that made her the rage all over again. "I thought young people would be throwing onions and rotten apples at me, but they were more enthusiastic than the older people," she observed with satisfaction.

Two years after that show, a young man knocked on her door and asked if she had work for him to do. Juan Hamilton became a fixture, directing the daily details of her life, getting her to wear colors for the first time, and to try her hand at making the clay pots that were his art. Rumors spread that the 90-year-old woman had married the man in his early 30s, but Hamilton said she was a different kind of family to him.

With Hamilton there, she began painting again, despite the fact that her eyesight had degenerated until she had no central vision.

"The truth is, I've been very lucky," she told the *New Yorker's* Calvin Tomkins in the last decade of her life. "Stieglitz was the most interesting center of energy in the art world just when I was trying to find my way. . . . My going to Texas was lucky, and, of course my finding this place. And then, somehow, what I painted happened to fit into the emotional life of my time. . . . Often I've had the feeling that I could have been a much better painter and have had far less recognition. It's just that what I do seems to move people today in a way that I don't understand at all."

Geo a O'Keeffe Dead at 98; Shar r of Modern Art in U.S.

3/7/86

By EDITH EVANS ASBURY

Georgia O'Keeffe, the undisputed doyenne of American painting and a leader, with her husband, Alfred Stieglitz, of a crucial phase in the development and dissemination of American modernism, died yesterday at St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe, N.M. She was 98 years old, and had lived in Santa Fe since 1984, when she moved from her longtime home and studio in Abiquiu, N.M.

As an artist, as a reclusive but overwhelming personality and as a woman in what was for a long time a man's world, Georgia O'Keeffe was a key figure in the American 20th century. As much as anyone since Mary Cassatt, the American Impressionist painter who worked with Degas in France, she raised the awareness of the American public to the fact that a woman could be the equal of any man in her chosen field.

As an interpreter and manipulator of natural forms, as a strong and individual colorist and as the lyric poet of her beloved New Mexico landscape, she left her mark on the history of American art and made it possible for other women to explore a new gamut of symbolic and ambiguous imagery.

Miss O'Keeffe was strong-willed, hard-working and whimsical. She would wrap herself in a blanket and wait, shivering, in the cold dark for a sunrise to paint; would climb a ladder to see the stars from a roof, and hop around in her stockings on an enormous canvas to add final touches before all the paint dried.

Miss O'Keeffe burst upon the art world in 1916, under auspices most likely to attract attention at the time: in a one-woman show of her paintings

Ralph Looney

Georgia O'Keeffe

Continued on Page A17, Column 1

Georgia O'Keeffe, Doyenne of American Painting, Dead at 98

Continued From Page A1

at the famous "291" gallery of Alfred Stieglitz, the world-renowned pioneer in photography and sponsor of newly emerging modern art.

From then on, Miss O'Keeffe was in the spotlight, shifting from one audacious way of presenting a subject to another, and usually succeeding with each new experiment. Her colors dazzled, her erotic implications provoked and stimulated, her subjects astonished and amused.

She painted the skull of a horse with a bright pink Mexican artificial flower stuck in the eye socket. She painted other animal skulls, horns, pelvises and leg bones that gleamed white against brilliant skies, spanned valleys and touched mountain tops, all with serene disdain for conventional notions of perspective. She also painted New York skyscrapers, Canadian barns and crosses and oversized flowers and rocks.

The artist painted as she pleased, and sold virtually as often as she liked,

students, artists and aficionados made an astonishing discovery. The artist who had been joyously painting as she pleased had been a step ahead of everyone, all the time.

Strolling through the Whitney show, one could think Miss O'Keeffe had made some "very neat adaptations of various successful styles of the 1950's and 1960's in her own highly refined and slightly removed manner," wrote John Canaday, art critic of The New York Times. He described apparent similarities to Clyfford Still, Helen Frankenthaler, Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt and Andrew Wyeth.

But the paintings that seemed to reflect those styles were done by Miss O'Keeffe in 1920 or earlier, Mr. Canaday pointed out, "when her seeming models were either not yet born or were delighting their mothers with their first childish scrawls."

With no thought of resting on her laurels, the indomitable octogenarian went right on working. She painted new pictures, wrote an autobiography illustrated with her paintings that sold out immediately at $75 a copy and cooperated in the production of a film about herself and her work that won an award from the Directors Guild of America for Perry Miller Adato, who produced it for WNET-TV in 1977.

Little European Influence

Despite the affinity of Miss O'Keeffe's work to paintings of other modern American artists, her paintings show surprisingly little evidence of the European influence seen in other American art. "She escaped the fate of remaining thrall to a European model by taking possession of her American experience and making that the core of her artistic vision," Hilton Kramer wrote in The Times in 1976 in his review of her book. Nevertheless, he declared, "her painting, though filled with vivid images of the places where she has lived, was anything but a product of the provinces."

dark hair drawn severely back and knotted into a bun in those years. No makeup softened the angularity of her face with its high cheekbones, but her large, luminous eyes betrayed inner fires. Her clothes were usually black, loose-fitting and shapeless, functional rather than fashionable.

Miss O'Keeffe's paintings hang in museums all over the United States — including, in New York, the Metropolitan, the Whitney and the Museum of Modern Art — and in most major private collections. But she retained a great deal of her prolific production.

Received Many Honors

Miss O'Keeffe was elected to membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She was awarded honorary degrees by several colleges and universities, including Mount Holyoke and Columbia in 1971 and Harvard in 1973.

Miss O'Keeffe interrupted the cherished tranquility of her life in Abiquiu to come East to receive the honors from Mount Holyoke, Columbia and Harvard. She donned the required cap and gown, marched with the faculty members and sat with them on the platform hearing herself extolled as a kind of artistic monument.

Back in Abiquiu, the "monument" resumed a daily routine of work, now with the help of a young protégé, Juan Hamilton, a potter. He had knocked at her kitchen door asking for work and made his way up from man Friday to secretary. He supervised production of her book, and assisted with and appeared in the television film about her in 1977. He traveled with her to New York and California and managed her business affairs. Their companionship was so close there were rumors of marriage.

In 1978 Mr. Hamilton, then 33 years old, came to New York alone on two missions. One was to put the finishing touches on the Metropolitan's exhibi-

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Miss O'Keeffe in a 1920 photograph made by her husband, Alfred Stieglitz, the pioneer photographer and patron of modern art who first encouraged her in her career.

for very good prices. She joined the elite, avant-garde, inner circle of modern American artists around Stieglitz, whom she married in 1924. Stieglitz took more than 500 photographs of her.

"He photographed me until I was crazy," Miss O'Keeffe said in later years. Others have called the pictures Stieglitz took of her the greatest love poem in the history of photography.

Her beauty aged well to another kind — weather-beaten, leathery skin wrinkled over high cheekbones and around a firm mouth that spoke fearlessly and tolerated no bores. And long after Stieglitz had died, in 1946, after Miss O'Keeffe forsook New York for the mountains and deserts of New Mexico, she was discovered all over again and proclaimed a pioneering artist of great individuality, power and historic significance.

Miss O'Keeffe had never stopped painting, never stopped winning critical acclaim, never stopped being written about as an interesting "character." But her paintings were so diverse, so uniquely her own and so unrelated to trends or schools that they had not attracted much close attention from New York critics.

Then, in 1970, when she was 83 years old, a retrospective exhibition of her work was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The New York critics and collectors and a new generation of

provinces."

Miss O'Keeffe's career, Mr. Kramer wrote, "is unlike almost any other in the history of modern art in America." It embraced virtually the whole history of modern art, from the early years of the century when Stieglitz exhibited the new art to a shocked New York, to its eventual acceptance as a part of our culture, according to Mr. Kramer. At the age of 89, when her book was published, Miss O'Keeffe remained "a vital figure first of all as a painter of remarkable originality and power but also as a precious link with the first generation of American modernists," he wrote.

Born on Wisconsin Farm

Georgia O'Keeffe was born on a wheat farm near Sun Prairie, Wis., on Nov. 15, 1887. Her father, Francis Calixtus O'Keeffe, was Irish; her mother was the former Ida Totto. Georgia was named for her maternal grandfather, Giorgio Totto, who came to the United States from Hungary, where he had gone from Italy.

When Miss O'Keeffe was 14 years old, the family moved to Williamsburg, Va. Three years later she graduated from Chatham Protestant Episcopal Institute in Virginia. She went immediately to Chicago, where she studied for a year at the Art Institute with John Vanderpoel. Both of her grandmothers had dabbled at painting, two of her four sisters painted and one taught art. The elder of her two brothers was an architect.

Miss O'Keeffe had decided in Sun Prairie that she was going to be an artist when she grew up although, she wrote in her book, "I hadn't a desire to make anything like the pictures I had seen" and she did not have a very clear idea of what an artist would be.

10 Discouraging Years

For 10 discouraging years, she studied and painted, supporting herself by doing commercial art for advertising agencies and by teaching. She attended art classes at the Art Students League in New York in 1907-08, the University of Virginia Summer School in 1912 and Teachers College of Columbia University in 1916.

She was supervisor of art in the public schools of Amarillo, Tex., from 1912 to 1916, and taught summer classes at Columbia College in South Carolina and the University of Virginia. In 1916 she became head of the art department of West Texas Normal College.

Miss O'Keeffe's early pictures were imitative, but as she developed her technique, a ruggedly individual style began to assert itself. The results were out of step with the popular taste and accepted style of the early 1900's, but they encouraged her to concentrate boldly on expressing her own ideas.

"One day," Miss O'Keeffe recalled in later years, "I found myself saying to myself, 'I can't live where I want to. I can't even say what I want to.' I decided I was a very stupid fool not to at least paint as I wanted to."

'At Last, a Woman on Paper'

A friend, Anita Pollitzer, showed a group of Miss O'Keeffe's drawings and watercolors to Stieglitz in 1916. Miss Pollitzer, later to become a champion of equal rights for women and chairman of the National Woman's Party, had been a classmate of Miss O'Keeffe's at Columbia.

"At last, a woman on paper!" Stieglitz exclaimed when he saw the pictures. He hung them in his gallery, and the unknown Miss O'Keeffe created an immediate stir in the art world.

"Mabel Dodge Luhan brought strings of psychiatrists to look at them," Stieglitz recalled later. "The critics came. There was talk, talk, talk." Some of the talk hinted at erotic symbolism.

Miss O'Keeffe stormed up from Texas and upbraided Stieglitz for showing her work without her permission. His answer was to persuade her to move to New York, abandon her teaching and devote herself to painting. He presented one-woman shows of her work almost annually thereafter until 1946, the year of his death. He and Miss O'Keeffe had been married 21 years.

After moving to New York, Miss O'Keeffe divided her time between New York City and Lake George, N.Y. After 1929, she also spent a great deal of time in New Mexico. She made her permanent residence at Abiquiu after the death of her husband.

Stieglitz's vigilant and canny management was a major factor in her rise to fame and fortune. Miss O'Keeffe continued to wear the clothes she pleased and to paint as she pleased.

Spare and dark-skinned, she had

Cecil Beaton photograph for Vogue

Georgia O'Keeffe at the entrance to her adobe house in Abiquiu, N.M. She also had a ranch in the vicinity.

touches on the Metropolitan's exhibition of Stieglitz photographs of Miss O'Keeffe. Mr. Hamilton had helped her select the pictures and had assisted in the preparation of the book containing reproductions published by the museum in conjunction with Viking Press.

Interrupted by Process Server

Mr. Hamilton's other mission was to mount his own exhibition of the sensuously sculptured pots, evocative of the desert, that Miss O'Keeffe had prodded him into producing. A gala party celebrating the opening of the show, at the Fifth Avenue Gallery of Robert Miller, was interrupted by a process server with notice that Mr. Hamilton was going to be sued for "malicious interference" with the business relationships of Doris Bry.

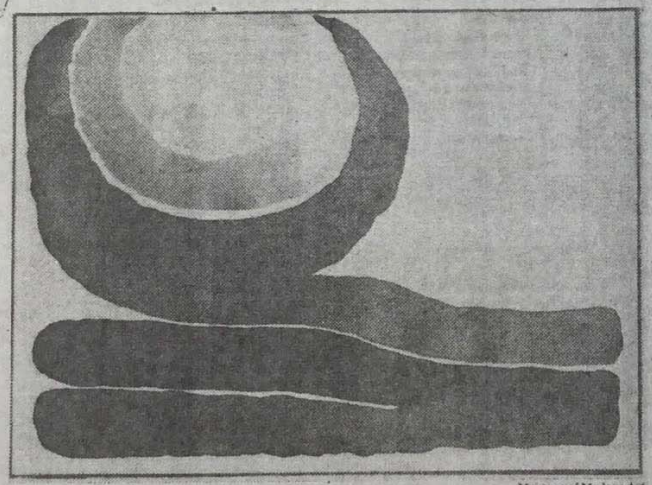
Miss Bry, the longtime New York representative of Miss O'Keeffe, had been dismissed about the time Mr. Hamilton had come on the scene, and Miss Bry tried to fight that dismissal with a Federal Court suit for $13.25 million against Mr. Hamilton charging that he induced Miss O'Keeffe to oust her.

"I don't know why she is suing him," Miss O'Keeffe snapped when she learned of it. "I don't know of anything wrong he has done!" The suit was later settled out of court.

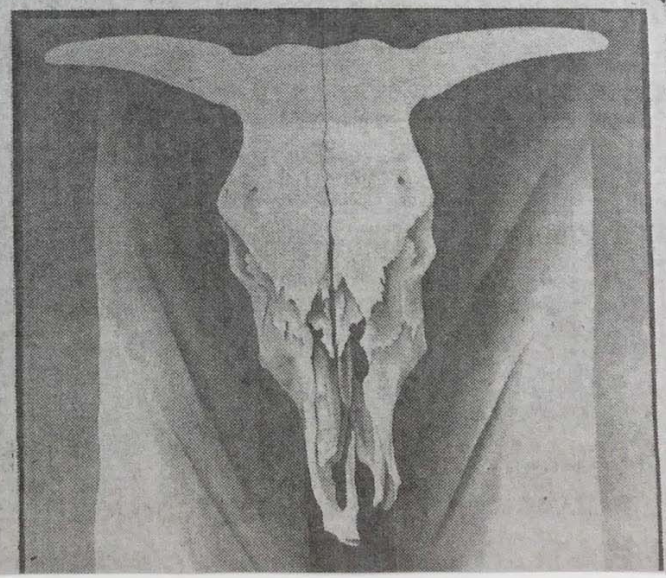
She traveled to New York to visit friends and see art exhibitions until recent years, when poor eyesight and failing health kept her at home.

Miss O'Keeffe won numerous awards, including the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, in 1977; an award from Radcliffe College for lifetime achievements by women, in 1983, and the National Medal of Arts in 1985.

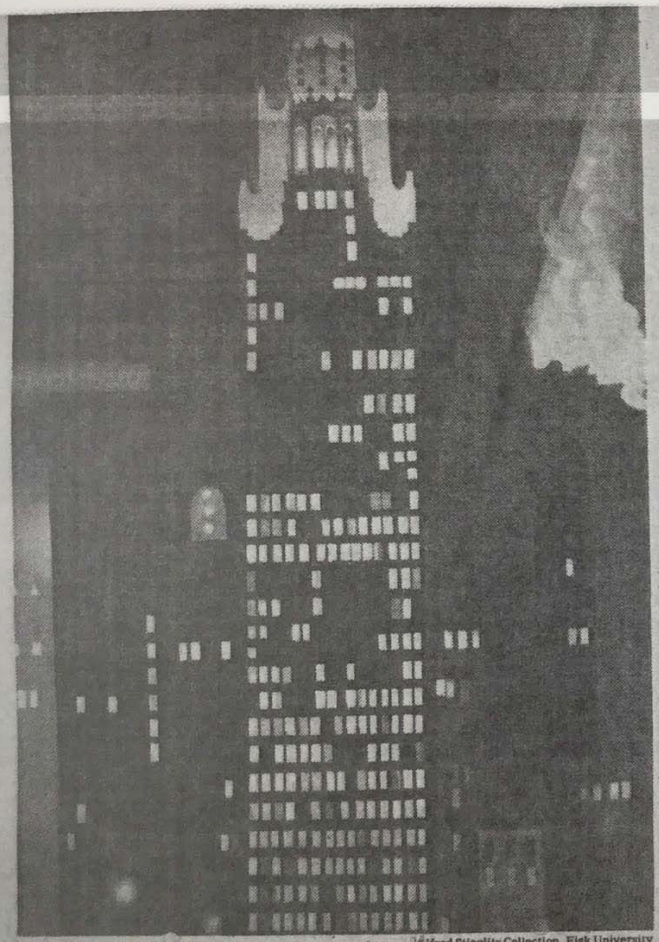
She is survived by a sister, Catherine Klenert.



Museum of Modern Art



Abstract landscapes, bleached animal skulls and stylized cityscapes were among the subjects of Miss O'Keeffe's best-



Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Fisk University

Abstract landscapes, bleached animal skulls and stylized cityscapes were among the subjects of Miss O'Keeffe's best-known paintings. Three examples: left, "Radiator Building — Night, New York," also known as "American Radiator Building," 1927; above, "Evening Star III," 1917; right, "Cow's Skull, Red, White and Blue," 1931.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Alfred Stieglitz Collection

The Phillips Collection, Washington

A 1925 O'Keeffe oil painting, "Dark Red Leaves on White."

An Artist Inspired by New Mexico's Landscape

By JOHN RUSSELL

It would be difficult to imagine American painting in the first half of this century without the presence of Georgia O'Keeffe. The presence, as much as the work, was what impressed, and it in no way diminished with age. It was a memorable experience to see her come into a room, even when she was well over 90. Gliding along the floor with one tiny quick step after another, she fixed the newcomer with an eye that was both penetrating and remarkably clear. No words were wasted, and it was evident that she had no time for bores, but she spoke her say — firmly, clearly, completely and concisely — without equivocation.

An Appreciation

A Great Partnership

She had, as goes without saying, a longer and deeper perspective in time than anyone else around. Faced as we were with someone who had enrolled as an art student at the Art Institute of Chicago as long ago as 1904, the art world of our century seemed to stretch almost to infinity, with one small and unmistakable figure forever in view.

Undeniably, her marriage helped. (It helped her husband, too, by the way). She and Alfred Stieglitz made one of the great partnerships. It was to his credit that he saw at once that she was an immensely gifted artist who had yet to have a fair shake with the American public. As the American public in 1916 was, to a large extent, Stieglitz's public, it was a happy day for her when he looked at her work and made his legendary comment, "At last, a woman on paper!"

But it was also a happy day for Stieglitz, in that Miss O'Keeffe released a strain of lyrical tenderness in his photography that led to the long and celebrated series of studies of her in every possible state of dress and undress and from every possible angle. She was his muse, and he her manager, and the world of art has not often seen as neat a match. Nor did she ever in any way subordinate herself to Stieglitz, formidable as he was.

In her work, she was probably best known and most influential for the reworkings of natural form that lent themselves — much against her will — to all manner of psychological and symbolic interpretations. If what seemed to her a perfectly straightforward exploration of botanical form got her interpreters tied in knots, she ignored the contortions of debate and went on exactly the same as before.

A Transcendental Quality

At this distance in time, however, it does sometimes seem that the voluptuous presences that she could distill from quite ordinary flowers did indeed have a transcendental quality. Admittedly, they could sometimes be read almost as scientific documents of natural growth and fulfillment, but there was something more to them than that — the kind of reworking and reshaping and intensifying that we associate with the jungles of the Douanier Rousseau and the outsize vegetation of Max Ernst. None of this had her warrant, or that of most of her admirers, but it was a tribute to a way of painting that never passed into history but remained as fresh and vital as when she first perfected it.

Her work was dominated in later years by the landscape and the architecture of New Mexico, where she lived for so long and with such an evident delight. That there should be light of such clarity, architectural forms of such simple nobility and such a largess of lion-colored space was a continual astonishment to her, and one that irradiated painting after painting.

Posters for Music Festival

It was characteristic of her feeling for New Mexico that when the Santa Fe Music Festival was founded she designed a poster for it, year by year.

Much as she treasured New Mexico over a period of more than 50 years, New Yorkers are entitled to remember that there was also a time, in the early heyday of the high-rise building, when she excelled as an interpreter of Manhattan. But, in the end, she is likely to be remembered above all for the quite small but immensely potent evocations of landscape and natural form that still have some of their secrets intact.

Georgia O'Keeffe, Creator of Desert Still-Lifes, Dies

L.A. Times
3/7/86

By BURT A. FOLKART,
Times Staff Writer

Georgia O'Keeffe, who externalized her search for the eternal verities into a series of crystalline paintings, making her America's undisputed empress of art, died Thursday.

Miss O'Keeffe died at St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe, N.M., at 12:20 p.m., said hospital spokesman Charles Cullen. He had no other details on her death and said only that she had moved to Santa Fe last summer from her remote desert adobe home in Abiquiu.

She was 98 and had outlived her roguish band of talented contemporaries by dozens of years.

Honored most recently by her country with the Medal of Freedom in 1977, she was a girl who served as a photography model for her husband, master photographer Alfred Stieglitz, who then matured

Please see O'KEEFFE, Page 27

O'KEEFFE: Creator of Desert Still-Lifes Dies

Continued from Page 1

into a painter who defied definition or categorization. The quests for cosmic meaning she sought through her palette had taken her to the stark isolation of her beloved New Mexico with its bleached animal skulls and exotic flowers that grew in the desert that was her front yard. And at her death she had become, if not a national treasure, one of America's most revered museum pieces.

In essence, there were two Georgia O'Keeffes, the one the sensuous, nude lover that Stieglitz romanticized in a series of more than 500 photographs of every inch of her body. That sexual being, deemed scandalous in the early years of this century in all but *avant garde* circles, has since been viewed in most of the world's better modern art museums. The second Georgia O'Keeffe was the private if not reclusive widow who prowled the desert, capturing death on canvas via the pelvic bones of fallen cattle that literally jumped at the viewer because of the boisterous blue skies she placed behind them. That was the woman as artist, an artist who drifted comfortably and often through regionalism, surrealism and abstractionism.

Born to Farming Family

Both these complex beings began as one in Sun Prairie, Wis., on Nov. 15, 1887, where Georgia O'Keeffe was born the second of seven children in a comfortable if not affluent farming family. She attended the rural school near her home and, reflecting the gentility of her family, with two sisters went into town one day a week for painting lessons.

In an extensive profile published in 1974 in the New Yorker, she recalled telling a girlhood friend when she was only 10 that she was going to be an artist. In yet another interview she said she had made that choice because "that was the only thing I could do that was nobody else's business. . . . I could do as I chose because nobody would care."

Her father's health began to fail and the family moved to Virginia when she was 14 to escape the Wisconsin winters. In Virginia the teen-age farm girl attended a boarding school and then enrolled in the Art Institute of Chicago. But she contracted typhoid and was forced to withdraw from school for an entire year. She resumed her art

Georgia O'Keeffe and one of the skulls prominent in her work.

teacher and moved to Amarillo, Tex., where she taught art. She also taught at Columbia College in South Carolina and in 1915 returned to New York to study under Arthur Dow and Alon Bement.

Those two men, particularly Dow, revived her dormant interest in painting.

"It was Arthur Dow who . . . helped me to find something of my own," she said. "He taught me the importance of design, of filling space in a beautiful way."

She returned to Texas, to teach and also to sketch. A few of those early charcoal drawings soon changed her entire life.

Miss O'Keeffe had sent them, wrapped in brown paper, to a friend in New York—just to keep the former college roommate aware of what she was doing. The friend, Anita Pollitzer, was an admirer and casual acquaintance of Stieglitz, then at the height of his reputation as not just a photographer but the keeper of a gallery where Matisses and Picassos and the other curious modernists of the day could be purchased.

The year was 1916 and the charcoal drawings of a 29-year-old Texas teacher impressed the 53-year-old aesthetic entrepreneur. "Finally, a woman on paper," he said in what has become a famous, if apocryphal, remark.

Felt Betrayed

But Miss O'Keeffe felt betrayed by her friend, complaining that the drawings were too facile for public examination. On her next visit to New York she insisted that Stieglitz remove them from his gallery.

She argued but her future husefforts was "The Shelton With Sun Spots," a 1926 examination of the New York skyline. She and Stieglitz had married in 1924 and taken an apartment high atop the Shelton Hotel.

They went on vacation to Lake George and she returned with "Lake George Window." Now she was beginning to reinvent nature, painting giant flowers from miniature blossoms. Two of her early efforts, "Tulip" and "Poppies," remain among her best-remembered paintings.

Her travels expanded and sometime in the late 1920s she discovered New Mexico (although she had passed through on a train years earlier). "Gate of Adobe Church" (1929) is a permanent recollection of one of those first visits in which she discovered that life's meanings could be expressed by using the skulls of horses and cows or via a full moon that shone unimpeded through a pristine desert night. Little by little she was exchanging the creations of man for the works of nature.

From then on, Stieglitz continued to vacation at Lake George. But alone. His wife was spending every free moment discovering that an artificial flower stuck into the eye of a horse's skull can depict both life and its alternative ("Horse's Skull With Pink Rose" 1931).

"Lake George is not really painting country," she said. ". . . Half your work is already done for you."

She settled first in Taos in a house that D.H. and Frieda Lawrence had occupied briefly. Later, after Stieglitz's death when the move West was made permanent, she found a rambling, devastated adobe in Abiquiu that she restored and that gave her a direct view of the mountains. The only things between the artist and her subject were the flowers and vegetables she had planted.

The hair, once dark, was now graying, but it was always worn drawn back severely from her face. Nothing interrupted her view.

Her paintings, which sold for a few thousand dollars in the 1920s, now were bringing considerably more and her expenses were minimal. She maintained a couple of servants, gave generously to needy Mexican-Americans and Indians who composed the tiny populace of her adopted village and even helped modernize the Abiquiu water system.

Built Town Gymnasium

She built a town gymnasium so the children that she never had could have someplace to go after school.

The interior of her home was as stark as many of her paintings. Simple furniture vied for floor space with the rocks she collected on the desert floor. The walls were made of the compacted earth of her new land. A few paintings were on the walls but very few of hers. One exception was "Sky Above Clouds," one of a series centered around the earth, sky and clouds she did after experiencing air travel and a theme that predominated her final years.

Her work, rediscovered by new generations at New York's Whitney Museum in 1970 and in 1977 in a national television documentary, continued to be simplified form set against vast spaces of color.

Late in her life she was seen constantly with Juan Hamilton, a friend nearly 60 years her junior and a potter whose designs strongly reflect the desert they shared. She employed him originally as a handyman, but for the last few years he had been in charge of arranging her new shows.

In 1983 she made a rare public appearance (wearing the white and black dresses that had become her trademark) and traveled to Washington for an exhibition of Stieglitz's photos, the first retrospective of his work in nearly 50 years. She left town as quietly as she had arrived.

Although she was a symbol of liberation to women of the latter 20th Century, she steadfastly refused to serve their causes. "They never helped me," she said of them. "The men helped me."

In 1974 she had told the New Yorker interviewer she considered herself "very lucky."

". . . Somehow what I painted happened to fit into the emotional life of my time. . . . Often I've had the feeling that I could have been a much better painter and had far less recognition. It's just that what I do seems to move people today in a way that I don't understand at all. . . .

"Now and then when I get an idea for a picture, I think, how ordinary. Why paint that old rock? Why not go for a walk instead?

"But then I realize that to someone else it may not seem ordinary."

An O'Keeffe oil painting entitled "Sunflower for Maggie."

education in 1907 but this time in New York where she soon began to gain notice for her still-life paintings. It was also at this time that Georgia O'Keeffe the girl began to attract attention.

The typhoid had left her bald and the hair that was gradually emerging came in curly. The stark, almost nonexistent coiffure coupled with her finely chiseled features made her a popular model at the Arts Students League and provided the experience in posing that Stieglitz capitalized on years later.

She observed once that being a model was never a comfortable experience for her and may have contributed to her preferring inanimate objects for her paintings.

But a certain disquietude was affecting her work. Although a rendering of a rabbit beside a copper pot brought her a prize, the slick painting styles then in vogue dismayed her and she withdrew not just from art school but from painting itself for several years.

"I found myself saying to myself," she said many years later . . . "I can't live where I want to . . . I can't go where I want to. . . . I can't do what I want to . . . I decided I was a very stupid fool not to at least paint as I wanted to and say what I wanted to when I painted, as that seemed to be the only thing I could do that didn't concern anybody but myself."

Miss O'Keeffe went to Chicago and designed for advertisements. She next decided to become a

litz remove them from his gallery.

She argued but her future husband prevailed. "He was a good talker," she remembered.

Again she returned to Texas but this time with an offer from Stieglitz to pay her living expenses for a year so she could devote all her time to painting. She accepted the offer and settled in New York, involving herself with Stieglitz for what would prove the rest of his life.

Stieglitz liked to say that his galleries were experimental expositories of art, not just rooms where paintings could be purchased. In New York Miss O'Keeffe soon found she was absorbing some of the qualities of the young artists around her, discarding other techniques and styles, and—within a few short years—had developed a stark style so unusual that none of the paintings in her first exhibit (1923) were even signed. Yet all who saw that exhibit, "One Hundred Pictures," recognized their creator.

It marked the first of the one-woman exhibitions that Stieglitz presented until his death in 1946.

The initial retrospective of her early work was held at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1927. Later her work drew crowds to the Art Institute of Chicago, the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

At her death her paintings were owned by more than 50 museums and formed a major part of many private collections.

As she would do later in the West, she now was doing in the East—painting the familiar, the convenient. One of her first prized

after Stieglitz's death when the move West was made permanent,

"But then I realiz
one else it may not s

SCENES

FROM A MARRIAGE

She called him "impossible"; he cast her as Eve. Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz were evenly matched–both driven, consumed by their work, and gifted at self-promotion–and their tabloid marriage made them the most intriguing couple in American art. The truth is they were both impossible–devoted to creating a myth that almost obscured their genius. Here, a sneak preview of **Benita Eisler**'s An American Romance: Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz which Doubleday will be publishing next year.

New Year's Day, 1916. Alfred Stieglitz, the great photographer, publisher, and impresario of modern art, had spent the cold, rainy holiday alone in his gallery, "291," named for its address on lower Fifth Avenue. The gallery was a legend: here, in two small rooms on the top floor of a brownstone, Stieglitz had given Picasso and Douanier Rousseau their first one-man shows, and Americans their first look at works by Cezanne, Matisse, Rodin, and Toulouse-Lautrec.

At twilight, a young art student came to the gallery carrying a roll of drawings by a friend named Georgia O'Keeffe. For a long while, Stieglitz looked at the abstract works in charcoal.

"Finally," he said, "a woman on paper."

Alfred Stieglitz's words on seeing the drawings of a twenty-nine-year-old art teacher from the provinces have passed into that nebulous realm between gospel and apocrypha. At fifty-two his wait had come to an end. He recognized in Georgia O'Keeffe's art his Eve.

Not *a* woman, but *the* woman.

Skeptical scrutiny has all but erased Stieglitz's words: no man could have uttered an exclamation so freighted with foreshadowing; a prophecy of expectation fulfilled, with a woman he had yet to meet. But, in fact, Alfred Stieglitz wrote these exact words about O'Keeffe's drawings and there is every reason to believe he was quoting himself—his favorite source. In a letter to the photographer Annie Brigman, an old friend and companion-at-arms, Stieglitz described the last days of 291, which had closed in the spring of 1917. One event had, miraculously, redeemed his feelings of bitterness and loss:

"The little room was never more glorious than during its last exhibition—the work of Miss O'Keeffe—a Woman on Paper. Fearless. Pure self-expression."

Together, the man waiting in the room on a bleak New Year's Day and the woman he was expecting became a couple encrusted in myth. But the raw material of myth was there from the beginning, in the reality of two larger-than-life people.

Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz became the most dynamic, productive, and celebrated couple in American art. They were evenly matched in force of character, devotion to work, and ambition—including a shared genius for self-promotion. Indeed, their collaborative role in generating and perpetuating >

JOSEPHINE B. MARKS

SUMMER LOVE: GEORGIA AND ALFRED AT LAKE GEORGE

O'Keeffe was independent by nature, feminist by conviction. But she was still her lover's creation and knew it...

the mystique of their union is an important part of their story. From their first days together and for the next thirty years, each was a catalyst, inspiration, critic, and publicist of the other. Their unwavering faith in fellow artists (initiated earlier by Stieglitz and backed first by his and later by O'Keeffe's financial support) sustained the careers of the first generation of American Modernists: Arthur Dove, John Marin, and Marsden Hartley.

From the start, their relationship was fraught with ambiguity and conflict, as O'Keeffe began to struggle free of Stieglitz's fixed idea of her. O'Keeffe was independent by nature, feminist by conviction, toughened by the realities of a childhood of poverty and family tragedy, but she was still her lover's creation and she knew it, with an often bitter knowledge. If she had not found a timely and powerful mentor in Alfred Stieglitz—famous for a quarter century as a photographer, publisher, and impresario of the most important showcase of contemporary art in America—there is a real question of when, even whether, the shy, prickly, provincial young woman would have achieved swift fame and enormous success.

With her characteristic honesty, O'Keeffe never failed to acknowledge all she owed to Stieglitz. Not that he would have allowed her to: Alfred Stieglitz was not a man to forgive a debt.

There were conflicts. When Stieglitz and O'Keeffe married in 1924, they had been living together for eight years. Pressure to legalize their union came from Alfred, then sixty. Georgia seems to have agreed largely because, at thirty-five, only a few years remained to conceive the child she longed for. Once married, Stieglitz found good reason to avoid having children. He pointed to the damaging effect that loss of freedom and responsibility for another life would have on her career. He reinforced his argument by the timely visit to Lake George of his former secretary and her obstreperous two-year-old child the summer before he and O'Keeffe wed.

That same summer saw the postpartum breakdown of Alfred's daughter, Kitty, twenty-five, followed by her commitment to an institution for the rest of her life. "I feel like a murderer," Alfred was to say of this tragedy. There was more truth than histrionics to his confession. The prospect of "losing" Georgia to motherhood and his own role as a father were freighted with anxiety and guilt.

Arrested in the role of adored son and misunderstood adolescent, Stieglitz endlessly reenacted the quarrels of childhood with his sisters and, by his own admission, fled the expectations of manhood. The miseries of his first marriage have much to do with his refusal to assume the responsibilities of husband, father, and provider. His wife, a brewery heiress, supported him, just as his family had done and would continue to do. When his parents died and his first marriage was dissolved, his younger brother Leopold took over the paternal role, housing Alfred and Georgia for four years. (In 1925 O'Keeffe managed to move Stieglitz, over his moans of poverty, into two small rooms in the Shelton Hotel—a hostelry originally built as a men's residence, where >

STIEGLITZ—EVER THE EUROPEAN ROMANTIC—

guests still dined in a cafeteria.)

Remaining a child in his private life, Stieglitz compensated in his public persona. He played Big Daddy to the artists and writers in his circle, all of whom, including O'Keeffe, had been abandoned, actually or symbolically, by their own fathers. Besides exhibiting his artists' work, he advanced them money and arranged sales and auctions; he helped writers get published—especially if they could be persuaded to write about O'Keeffe or Stieglitz. Most crucial of all, he lavished support, encouragement, and even love on his adopted "children," along with liberal helpings of advice, chastisement, and attempts to control their lives.

In contrast, O'Keeffe distanced herself early from her troubled family; her relations with her three sisters were friendly—as long as they "knew their place": helping her care for an ailing Alfred; working in her Abiquiu, New Mexico garden; or in the case of Anita O'Keeffe Young, wife of a railroad magnate, buying Georgia's paintings. She threatened terrible vengeance upon Ida and Catherine, who tentatively tried to claim careers as painters. She severed relations entirely with one brother, explaining that when she was "finished" with someone she "just turned the page." A second brother disappeared on his own. She did not return to Virginia at the time of either parent's death.

Hardy and ever more adventurous, O'Keeffe first explored Nova Scotia, Maine, and the Southwest in a period when that still meant roughing it. Meanwhile, Stieglitz's world continued to shrink. His summer trips abroad ended in 1911; thereafter, he left New York City only for the annual hegira to Lake George. Here, in early summer, the entire Stieglitz tribe—children, servants, pets, and mountains of possessions—would settle until October; and this routine continued after his marriage to Georgia.

O'Keeffe grew to hate summers at the Lake: the endless and bland communal meals; the lack of privacy or solitude for work; the presence of numerous children, reminders of battles lost. The landscapes and still-lives she painted there reflect her feelings: a narrow, stormy lake ringed with suffocating low hills; leaves of sere tobacco-brown or vibrating poisonous green threaten to choke a small vertical canvas. Eventually she made her own studio, "the Shanty," from an abandoned outbuilding. They imported their own friends, staying later into the fall each year for their most productive periods of work and happiest weeks of pleasure.

The break between them began, ironically, with their marriage, and continued to widen. To work—and to breathe—Georgia needed to get away. In the summer of 1929, Georgia, accompanied by Rebecca Strand, wife of the photographer, set out for Taos, New Mexico. In the four months she spent at Mabel Dodge Luhan's ranch, Las Palomas, Georgia became part of the vortex of spiritual, creative, and sexual experiment that

HOT SHOT: YOUNG ALFRED WITH HIS FATHER, BELOW LEFT AND, BELOW RIGHT, WITH HIS CAMERA

swirled around Mabel. At the same time Georgia found the natural world she had always wanted to paint, along with the architecture and artifacts of colonial Christianity fused with Indian ritual which would fascinate her until the end of her life. She spent longer months every summer thereafter in New Mexico, first in rented houses, then in her own. Her life apart from Stieglitz had begun.

In the winters they were reunited in New York City. But there were new areas of strain between them. A precursor of today's young artists, Georgia eagerly embraced commercialism. She gloried in both the money and the publicity of commissions from Elizabeth Arden, Dole Pineapple, and especially the Radio City Music Hall in 1932. When the mural she executed for the "powder room" of that great theater fell off the walls because of an unstable preparation, Georgia succumbed to the breakdown that had been building for some time.

With the years, the disparity in their ages became more obvious as different sexual needs emerged. From accounts of those who knew her in her twenties, as well as companions of her later years, O'Keeffe seems always to have been bisexual. A tracing of her attachments conforms to Margaret Mead's theory of the natural cycle of female sexuality: lesbian or bisexual in the younger years, heterosexual in the childbearing period, returning to homosexuality in late middle age. Complex in every aspect of her being, the term "bisexual" seems reductive when applied to O'Keeffe. Gender was unimportant in her powerful and urgent sexuality. At forty-six she had a passionate relationship with the black novelist Jean Toomer, seven years her junior; she was attracted to older gay men, young Hispanic studs (especially those with a record of violence), and submissive young women of any ethnic origin: these she referred to as her "slaves."

During the famous Taos summer of 1929, evidence strongly suggests that Georgia was sexually involved with Rebecca Strand, Mabel Dodge Luhan and her husband Tony Luhan, a full-blooded Navajo.

Whether Stieglitz was aware of O'Keeffe's polymorphous sexuality is a question that, for the present, must remain unanswered. In his very first photographs of her, Georgia's masculine qualities emerge strongly.

As he grew older, Stieglitz needed and found ever-younger women to instruct and seduce, and they in turn, worshipped him. Three years after his marriage, Dorothy Norman, dark, adoring, and unhappily married to the heir of a retailing fortune, became the acolyte Georgia never was. With her husband's money and her gifts as hostess, editor, and publicist, Dorothy Norman subsidized the successors to 291, founding a journal devoted to praise of the Master.

Mrs. Norman was the least troubled chapter in Stieglitz's sexual history.

In his relations with his daughter, Kitty, Alfred exploited an incest scenario all the more destructive as it hovered between fantasy and actuality. Following her early breakdown and permanent commitment, Stieglitz's pedophilia became an open secret. Like most child molesters, his "romances" with pubescent girls seemed to have remained in the family; at Lake George, the more suspicious or sophisticated of his female relations worried about the safety of young daughters left alone with Uncle Al. Stieglitz's grandniece and biographer

STIEGLITZ'S PEDOPHILIA CAME TO LIGHT AFTER HIS DAUGHTER, KITTY—WITH HER FATHER, RIGHT, IN A STEICHEN PHOTO—WAS INSTITUTIONALIZED.

makes an anxious case that his fondling and sexual interrogation of adolescent relatives proved a harmless prelude to adult sexuality. Given what we know about the sexual exploitation of children by male relatives and the ways in which families collude to protect the offender, this defense leaves many questions unanswered.

As a human being, Stieglitz was "impossible," O'Keeffe would later say in her characteristically blunt style. It was his devotion to work—not only to art, but to the sanctity of every menial task—that she found inspiring: "There is nothing more beautiful than the eye on the object look," wrote W.H. Auden. No accident that the most beautiful photographs of Stieglitz show him working—"on deck" as he would have said.

"A real worker" was the way Stieglitz proudly described O'Keeffe.

Long after the end of sexual passion, of the possibility of a life together, they were still there for each other. Bound by ties of affection, loyalty, and respect, by the presence of each in the other's art, their devotion survived the erosion of time; the eclipse of the mentor by the disciple; Alfred's efforts to control and even thwart Georgia's career (becoming more autocratic as his power waned); her humiliation at the public role of Mrs. Norman in his life. Their faith in one another withstood her defection to "commerce," to the museums he despised and the Southwest which he refused ever to visit, outlasting his final decline into old age and illness which turned lovers and friends into nurses and caretakers.

Too easily forgotten in our fascination with their lives, with their glamour and synergy as a couple, is the more compelling reason why they continue to intrigue us: the immense importance of both Stieglitz and O'Keeffe as artists.

"I was born in Hoboken, I am an American. Photography is my passion. The search for Truth my obsession."

Alfred Stieglitz was an American only by virtue of his birth certificate. By all other measures—his education, his art, and his world view—he was a nineteenth-century European romantic.

The oldest son of a German Jewish immigrant who made a fortune in the woolen business, Alfred grew up surrounded by emigrés like his own parents: cultivated wealthy bourgeois of artistic leanings, or visiting German painters patronized by the elder Stieglitz. In the grand family house, just off Fifth Avenue, ice water pumped into every room was the only concession to American culture.

Taken abroad at an early age, the Stieglitz children were first taught by tutors and governesses; later, finishing schools and *gymnasia* made sure the five youngsters received a thoroughly European education. After a year of engineering studies at City College in New York, Alfred returned to Germany where, following his discovery that photography was, indeed, his passion, he would remain for nine years.

Stieglitz's attraction to Georgia O'Keeffe, born on a farm in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin; his ardent championship of an American Modernism; his notions of an America "out there" (which he never saw) owe everything to the romantic's idealization of a foreign country and the first generation American's uneasy purchase on his culture.

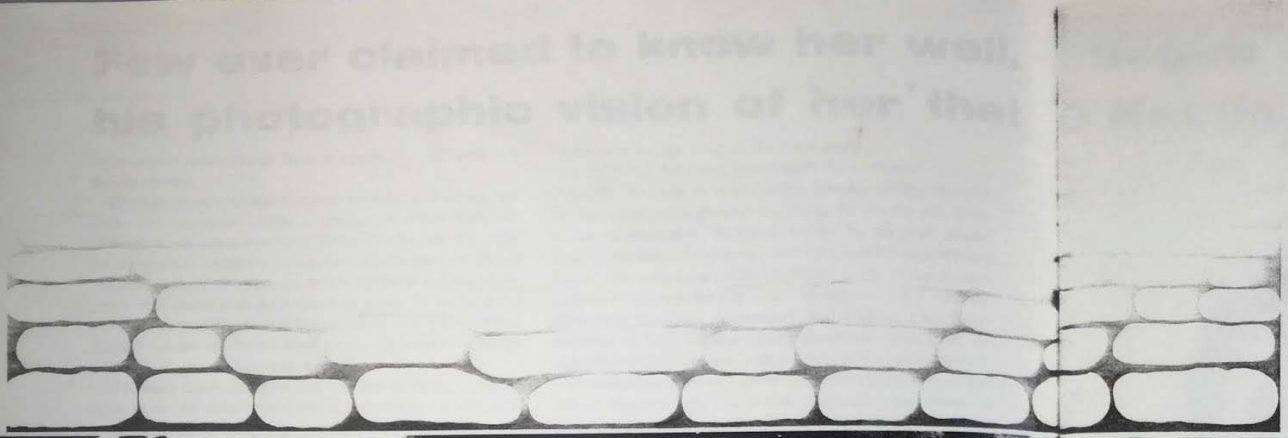
In life, his relationship to the Truth tended to be accidental. In the greatest of his photographs, however, his obsession unfailingly rewards us.

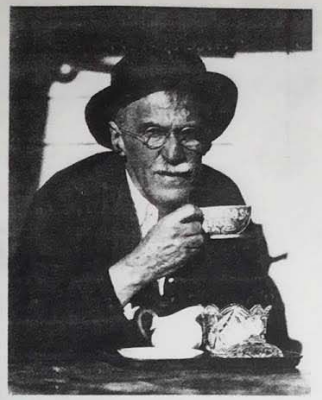
Reviewing an exhibition of Stieglitz prints, Edmund Wilson, not a critic promiscuous with praise, observed that there was in "Stieglitz [an] amazing genius for making the camera an instrument of the artist's sensibility...a genius of a sort so unusual that between the productions of Stieglitz and the photographs of the ablest of his rivals there seems to lie a difference not merely of degree but almost of kind." Seen alongside the work of his peers, in that photographic pantheon known as the "Big S's"—Steichen, Stieglitz, Sheerler, and Strand—the great Stieglitz photographs attain an order of the absolute that eludes all others.

Alone among twentieth-century portraits, Stieglitz's photographs of his friends, lovers, and fellow artists do not "date"; he rarely used the backlighting or mannered poses that effectively make period pieces of even the best work by his contemporaries. His images of Dove and Marin, Paul Strand, Sherwood Anderson, and O'Keeffe herself have the timelessness and immediacy of Eakins's great portraits. We confront our own mortality in the stare of Charles Demuth, the artist as dandy, ravaged by the diabetes that would kill him. Whatever his subject, one critic observed, Stieglitz was always photographing himself. There is an intimacy and inwardness to the gaze of these men and women that becomes a collective and collaborative portrait of the American artist and intellectual: melancholy, alone, and like Alfred's image of himself, stoically "struggling."

Most revealing of his romantic esthetic, Stieglitz's *Equivalents*, a series of meditations on nature begun in 1923, was literally a >

The break between them began, ironically, with their marriage. To work, Georgia had to get away





O'KEEFFE

cosmic undertaking. Spanning more that a decade, the thousands of images of clouds above Lake George is the photographer's most avowedly expressive work. Both the larger title and the name he gave to the first group, *Songs of the Sky*, pay tribute to the correspondences linking his work to the Symbolist art he always favored. In these prints, whose miniscule size—usually 2x3—underlines, by contrast, their sublime subject, Alfred sought analogies to both music and to his most intense feelings: from sexual passion to the fear of death that overwhelmed him when Georgia left for that first summer in Taos. The Argentine critic and editor Victoria Ocampo was so moved by the sense of the sublime conveyed by these images of nature, she wrote to Stieglitz that they could be photographs taken by God.

"Maybe so," he replied.

Whether or not acknowledged by the Deity as His work the *Songs of the Sky* were acquired in 1924 by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, among the first photographs to be collected by an American museum.

In 1917, following her first one-woman show—and the last exhibition of 291—Stieglitz took his first photographs of Georgia O'Keeffe, "several of my hands and face," she recalled.

Celebrating the beauty of his beloved, in pursuit of her remote mysterious essence, Stieglitz, depressed and ready to abandon photography, experienced a rebirth of his genius. The more than three-hundred photographs he took of O'Keeffe began with the first days of their passion and ended, in the late 1930s, with classic images of distance and separation: the artist framed by the window of her Ford, her arm resting on the steering wheel.

Between discovery and departure, this great serial portrait records a love, lyrical and obsessive; O'Keeffe's mouth and labia, navel and thighs, pubic hair, breasts, and toes are the objects of a private cult with its own rituals; ecstatic and tender, but also violent and brutal. In these often troubling images, nothing stands between the photographer and his subject. The expression of pure feeling in these pictures, he later said, was the artistic peak he always sought. >

In these often troubling images, nothing stands between the photographer and his subject. More than a collaboration, Stieglitz's portrait of O'Keeffe is a double portrait

THIS PAGE: O'KEEFFE BY STIEGLITZ, ABOVE, WITH HER GETAWAY CAR. TOP, O'KEEFFE'S SKY ABOVE CLOUDS IV AND, RIGHT, STIEGLITZ'S EQUIVALENT, FROM HIS 1925 SERIES. OPPOSITE PAGE: STIEGLITZ, TOP, AS PHOTOGRAPHED BY IDA O'KEEFFE, AND STIEGLITZ'S BREAST AND HANDS, 1919

Few ever claimed to know her well. his photographic vision of her that

More than a collaboration, Stieglitz's portrait of O'Keeffe is a double portrait.

Whether because of their God-like anonymity in an age that exalts the "signature" (only a fraction of prints from the O'Keeffe portrait have ever been exhibited) or because the vogue for photography, relatively recent, has tended to focus on the old and quaint (Atget's Paris) or the trendy and shocking (Mapplethorpe's male torsos with penis rings); or simply because color is more exciting and memorable than black and white, Alfred Stieglitz remains an obscure name to many who know Georgia O'Keeffe as a Great American Artist.

O'Keeffe's fame, the myths that continue to swirl around the figure of the late artist—the beautiful wrinkled face as celebrated as the most reproduced poster—make it difficult to see her art.

From the first, the painter's relation to these myths has been problematic. Starting from the role Stieglitz invented for her—the "Great Primitive Woman Child," whose innocence of both artistic training and European influences, combined with "Pure Intuition," enabled her to express women's sexuality—O'Keeffe began by accepting, then denying, sexual interpretations of her work. A chronology of her reactions, however, suggests that the denials occurred after the benefits (reviews and publicity spiced with Freudian catchphrases) had been exhausted.

O'Keeffe's role in another Stieglitz production, the myth of the artist as Venus, is still more equivocal. In 1921 Alfred exhibited forty-five prints from his portrait of Georgia, nudes among them. The *succès de scandale* was immediate and predictable. The magnet that drew hundreds of thousands to the art of Georgia O'Keeffe was the sensational publicity generated by images of the naked artist.

Following her move to the Southwest, Georgia herself perpetuated the most tenacious myth of her long life: the anchorite in the desert, living and working in chosen subsistence poverty, using the materials at hand in her art.

In fact, well before her death in 1986, O'Keeffe was one of the richest self-made women in America, whose way of life reflected her wealth: houses, travel, servants, fancy cars. Indeed, most of her friends were rich. She visited them in Bermuda, Palm Beach, Lyford Cay, and the horsier precincts of New Jersey. There is nothing shameful about an artist enjoying well-deserved success. We know now, however, that the austere O'Keeffe image was as much a work of art as her transformation of found objects: the cow skulls—bleached on her patio to make them white—and the black-robed figure of the artist have fused in the popular imagination to become part of Santa Fe Chic.

Empty of human elements or historic event, O'Keeffe landscapes have been claimed as an outgrowth of the earlier, traditionally defined Precisionism: the paintings of sleek skyscrapers and vertical urban vistas. With time, her wrinkled gray mountains and vivid cliffs have acquired a new significance, an accompanying "text" inseparable from their meaning as art. Beginning with the 1950s—the time O'Keeffe moved to the Southwest—these pristine, unpopulated, underdeveloped sites acquired the glamour of scarcity, becoming views that only the rich could afford—whether in nature or as owners of O'Keeffe's art.

Nostalgia thus has come to play a crucial role in the O'Keeffe myth: she has become part of the Old West made newly available through the marketing genius of Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein, whose taste we can savor in blue corn chips.

In 1970 the Feminist movement rediscovered Georgia O'Keeffe. An early feminist herself, member of the National Woman's party throughout its existence, she saw the only battle as one of integration. Accepted, finally, by the men around Stieglitz, she had early come to resent the label of "Great Woman Artist." She behaved no more graciously to the young women painters who sought her out as the "Mother of Us All" than she did to their "theoretist" counterparts who, looking at her flower paintings, or lush, organ-colored abstractions, trotted out the same old Freudian readings, with new words like "gynocentric."

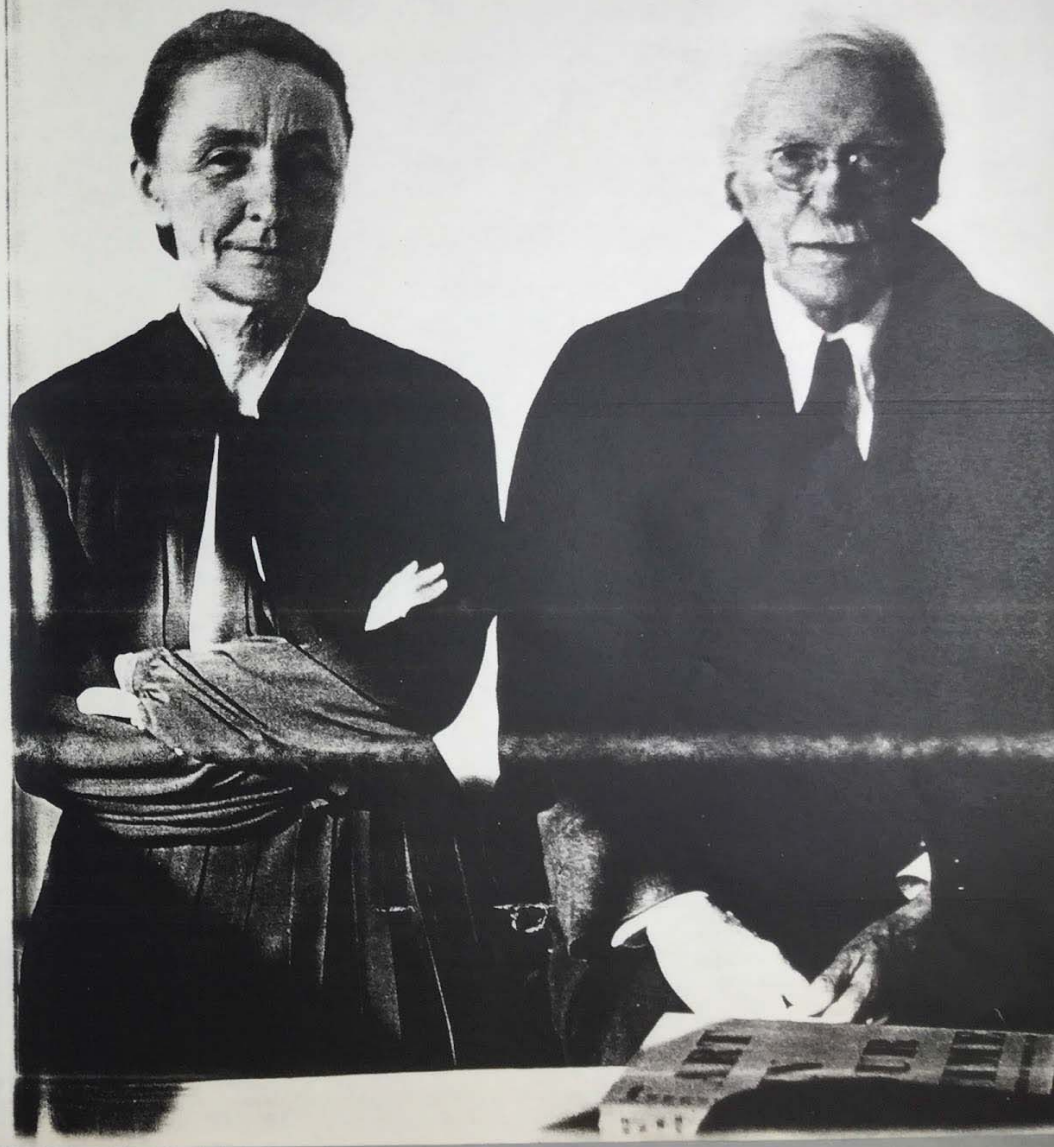
Critical debate continues on the value of O'Keeffe's contribution to American art. The power, originality, and beauty of many pictures is indisputable. But her long life as an artist, inspiring in human terms, did little service to her art, seen as a whole. The Stieglitz cook at Lake George marveled at the speed with which "Miss O'Keeffe" could produce a finished picture *and* complete an immaculate clean-up—all in less than a day's work! Significantly, she was one of the rare artists who rejected proposals for a *catalogue raisonné* of her paintings and drawings. The number of O'Keeffe knock-offs of O'Keeffe have contributed to recent judgments of the painter as a "modest master" and, more harshly, "a second-rate artist."

More interesting than the verdict on O'Keeffe's rank is the phenomenon of her popularity. With the exception of Andrew Wyeth, no other artist reaches so deeply into the feelings of a public who does not typically frequent museums or buy reproductions. The same nostalgia has played a part in the adoption of both artists by millions of fans. The closest to "painters laureate" of any figures in the visual arts, they both tap into a yearning to identify with an idealized collective past: of unspoiled scenery and smogless blue skies; of bones of dead animals from which the process of death and decay has been purified; of roadside crosses that do not remind us of Christ in Agony; of farms that are not "agribusinesses" dotted with barns of aged wood.

To see the pleasurable anticipation on the faces of people patiently waiting in line to see an exhibition of O'Keeffe's America is to realize that the elements of Modernism that she made so completely her own are more than accessible: they have become national symbols—as recognizable as the red, white, and blue background she gave to her famous "joke" painting (made because she got so tired, she said, of hearing writer friends talk about the Great American Novel). With our recent elevation of the regional, O'Keeffe's bones have become as much an emblem of America as the Bald Eagle or Old Glory itself. The artist who created uniquely seductive icons of our collective identity also possessed a quintessentially American form of genius: self creation.

Few ever claimed to know her well. To each of her friends, she presented an entirely different self. Stieglitz claimed that it was in his photographic portrait that O'Keeffe discovered her "many selves." Along with her great talent and varied accomplishments—cooking, gardening, even sewing—she was skillful at covering her tracks. Retracing the steps of her graceful movements, we return to the reality of her beginnings. As she allowed herself to be imagined by Alfred Stieglitz, the European-educated German Jew who never ventured west of the Hudson, Georgia O'Keeffe was a "real American girl." ☒

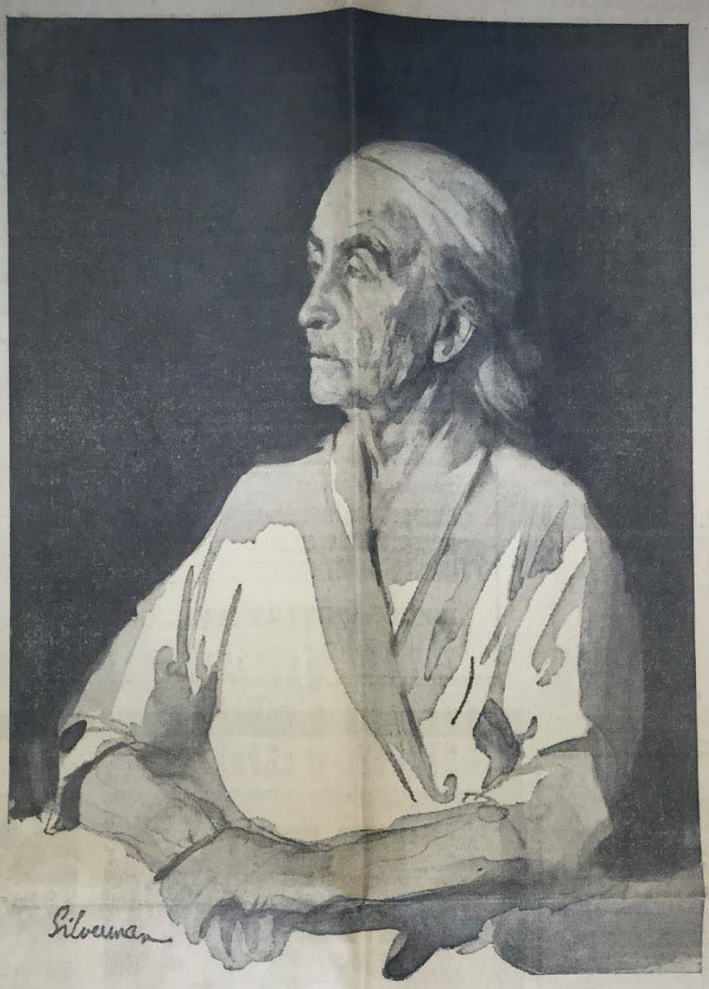
Stieglitz claimed that it was in O'Keeffe discovered her many selves



LEGENDS: O'KEEFFE AND STIEGLITZ BY CECIL BEATON

PROFILES

THE ROSE IN THE EYE LOOKED PRETTY FINE



Georgia O'Keeffe

"Georgia O'Keeffe, who is eighty-six, spends almost no time thinking about the past. 'You'd push the past out of your way entirely if you only could,' she said to me one morning last fall, sitting in the open patio of her house near the Ghost Ranch, in the New Mexican high desert, seventy miles northwest of Santa Fe. What interested her at the moment were the wild purple asters that grow so abundantly at this time of the year, when there has been enough rain."

"A slight, immaculate woman with white hair tied back in a smooth knot, she is as handsome today as she was at twenty-nine, when Alfred Stieglitz began his famous multiple portrait of her, now in the National Gallery, in Washington—a portrait that eventually included some five hundred photographs."

"Although much of the new work looked wholly abstract, it was always based on something she had seen in the landscape. The 'Light Coming on the Plains' series had its origin in what she often saw in the very early morning, before the sun rose. 'The light would begin to appear, and then it would disappear and there would be a kind of halo effect, and then it would appear again. The light would come and go for quite a while before it finally came. It was the same with the trains. You could see the morning train coming a long way off, and then it would disappear, and then you'd see it again, closer. The country was so flat, but there were slight depressions in it, and things would drop out of sight.'"

"When she painted desert flowers with a skull ('Summer Days,' 1936), she says, there was no symbolism intended. Nor was there in 'Horse's Skull with Pink Rose' (1931). O'Keeffe explained to me that she had a collection of artificial flowers, which the Spanish people in her part of the country used for funeral decorations. 'I was looking through them one day when someone came to the kitchen door,' she said. 'As I went to answer the door, I stuck a pink rose in the eye socket of a horse's skull. And when I came back the rose in the eye looked pretty fine, so I thought I would just go on with that.'"

From a Profile of Georgia O'Keeffe by Calvin Tomkins appearing in this week's issue (March 4) of The New Yorker. Yes, The New Yorker.