

Georgia O'Keeffe

Artist (1887-1986)

Georgia O'Keeffe was regarded as the premier female artist of the 20th century, combining both the representational and the abstract. Though she focused on nature and some man-made works, O'Keeffe rarely painted humans or other animals. Within nature she was particularly fond of painting flowers, creating more than one hundred, often gigantic, representations.

Born on November 15, 1887 in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, Georgia was the second of seven siblings in a Midwestern farming family. The fearlessness and originality Georgia exhibited in her work and personal life was greatly influenced by the equality and democratic prairie society of her youth.

At the age of 16, the O'Keefe family moved to Williamsburg, Virginia where Georgia took her first art class. Two years after these first art classes Georgia studied at the school of the Art Institute in Chicago.

Georgia continued to take classes and eventually studied with William Merritt Chase in New York City, but her father's business failures forced Georgia to become a commercial artist for two years.

From 1912 to 1914 Georgia taught drawing and penmanship in Amarillo, Texas, which was at that time a rowdy and raucous frontier town. Though the townsfolk regarded Georgia as a strange woman because of her physical appearance and behavior, she was drawn to the vast emptiness of the plains.

In 1924 she married Alfred Stieglitz, a New York photographic chemist and gallery owner; the next year his gallery exhibited seven American artists, including O'Keefe. During this time in New York City, Georgia began to paint skyscrapers and city skylines.

For the next few years Georgia spent much of her time in New York and New Mexico, always utilizing what surrounded her. In

1946, Stieglitz died of a stroke, and though she kept their New York apartment, Georgia spent most of her time in New Mexico. However, she was an avid traveler and had spent time on all the continents; Asia was her favorite.

When she was 84, Georgia began to go blind, but throughout the 1960s and 1970s she continued to paint with the aid of a young ceramic artist, Juan Hamilton. Her last unaided oil painting was completed in 1972. In 1977, President Ford bestowed upon her the Medal of Freedom and then in 1985, she received the National Medal of Arts from President Reagan. Her 90th birthday, which was celebrated in 1977, was held at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

One year after she received the National Medal of Arts, Georgia died. In 1997, the Georgia O'Keefe Museum opened in Santa Fe, New Mexico and can still be visited today.

Some thoughts from Georgia O'Keeffe:

“To create one’s own world in any of the arts takes courage.”

- Georgia O’Keeffe, *Georgia O’Keeffe* (1976)

“I said to myself – I’ll paint what I see – what the flower is to me but I’ll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking time to look at it – I will make even busy New Yorkers take time to see what I see in flowers.”

- Georgia O’Keeffe, *Georgia O’Keeffe* (1976)

“Nobody sees a flower really; it is so small. We haven't time, and to see takes time - like to have a friend takes time.”

- Georgia O’Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum
217 Johnson Street
Santa Fe, NM 87501
Telephone: 505.946.1000
Okeeffemusuem.org



Georgia O'Keeffe

Artist
(1887-1986)



“Filling a space in a beautiful way.
That is what art means to me.”