

Museum Highlight



**Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), *Georgia O'Keeffe*,  
 1923, gelatin silver print, 11.7 x 9.1  
 centimeters,  
 George Eastman House, Rochester, NY. Part  
 purchase and part gift of An American Place.  
 Ex-collection Georgia O'Keeffe**

## Georgia O'Keeffe

Displayed at Fresno Metropolitan Museum, Fresno October 22, 2004 – January 2, 2005

"Georgia O'Keeffe: Visions of the Sublime," on view at the Fresno Metropolitan Museum of Art, features more than 30 paintings, one sculpture and a number of drawings spanning her entire career. In addition, a selection of photographs by her husband Alfred Stieglitz and close friend Todd Webb complement the work to provide a candid glimpse into the life of this celebrated American icon.

The name Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) is among a handful immediately recognized by the general public. Her paintings are well known as originals in museums or as countless posters, and she has been the subject of numerous publications and exhibitions both in the United States and, increasingly, abroad. As an integral part of the American art scene since the 1910s, she has been viewed almost exclusively in the context of twentieth-century mod-ernism, notwithstanding her own attempts to distance herself from both scene and context. Her popularity was engendered by the refined sophistication and simplicity of her imagery, the endless debate about her life, accomplishments, and continuing legacies for new generations. In her earliest works, O'Keeffe was already a visionary who intuitively created new de?nitions of the sublime, enhanced our perceptions of its visual symbols, and inevitably provided us with new ways to view our surroundings and explore our inner selves.

From the beginning of her explorations she struggled between so-called but loosely de?ned abstractions and more representational work. By the early 1930s, she wrote about "that memory or dream thing I do for me comes nearer reality than my objective kind of work ...." In this she was most herself; the unconscious visualizations or dreamscapes from nature hinting at a greater meaning that eludes the physical dimension.

The sublime was not a theoretical concept for O'Keeffe; it was manifest in her everyday worldly experiences, the unmediated response of a temperament acutely attuned to nature. Although most of O'Keeffe's landscapes depict specific places, the sublime was not associated with a physical location. With its ever-changing beauty and intimations of infinity the southwestern landscape was clearly a physical place she loved, however she also found those same qualities in Texas, Canada, New York, Hawaii, and elsewhere.

O'Keeffe demonstrated an intuitive association with all that can be considered sublime, and in her remarkable journey with color, line, light, and form from the abstract to the representational and hovering between the two, she pursued a spiritual quest that has dramatically refined the visual qualities of the sublime far beyond the notion defined by traditional visual symbols. Her paintings were powerful poems distilled from her imagination and her vision of our surroundings, seductively simple and appealing, yet highly complex explorations of ever-relevant universal sentiments. Her work spoke directly to twentieth-century modern art with an originality and vitality that today retains a relevance not easily equaled.

### Fresno Metropolitan Museum, Fresno

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**Georgia O'Keeffe** *Blue River (Chama River, Ghost Ranch)*, 1935, oil on canvas, 30 1/2 x 16 1/2 inches, Museum of New Mexico, Museum of Fine Arts. Gift of the Estate of Georgia O'Keeffe, 1987. © 2003 Museum of New Mexico, Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe. Photo: Blair Clark



**Georgia O'Keeffe** *Waterfall—No. III—'Īao Valley*, 1939, oil on canvas, 24 x 20 inches, Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu, Gift of Susan Crawford Tracy, 1996



**Georgia O'Keeffe** *Spring Tree No. II*, 1945,  
oil on canvas, 30 x 36 inches, Dallas  
Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas. From the  
estate of Patsy Lacy Griffith

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