

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PAINTINGS OF GEORGIA O'KEEFFE SHOWN IN RETROSPECTIVE
EXHIBITION AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Finally a woman on paper."

These words, spoken by Alfred Stieglitz in 1915, were the actual launching of Georgia O'Keeffe on a career that has led to her recognition as a major American artist. On Wednesday, May 15, a retrospective exhibition of her works will open at the Museum of Modern Art and continue through August 25. The exhibition has been selected and installed by James Johnson Sweeney, Director of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture. Mr. Sweeney has also written the book on O'Keeffe which the Museum will publish concurrently with the exhibition.

When the internationally known photographer spoke his career-launching words he had for more than a decade, in his small but famous gallery "291", been introducing to the American public the most modern painting and sculpture from abroad as well as the most advanced American art. When a friend showed him several drawings by Georgia O'Keeffe, at that time teaching art in a South Carolina college, Stieglitz was instantly impressed. He kept the drawings and in the spring of 1916 put ten of them on exhibition in "291."

This was Georgia O'Keeffe's debut as an artist. The next year Stieglitz gave her a one-man show, the last exhibition before he closed the gallery at "291." In 1923 he presented at The Anderson Galleries 100 oils, watercolors and pastels and drawings by O'Keeffe. In 1924 Stieglitz married the artist whom he had taken such pride in having discovered. The next year and annually since then he has held an exhibition of her work in his gallery, now "An American Place."

In the text Mr. Sweeney has written for the O'Keeffe book he comments on the artist and her work as follows:

"An expression of intense emotion, stark but always constrained, is the essence of O'Keeffe's art. And the way she came to this was by the severest critical self-stripping."

In 1923 Georgia O'Keeffe herself explained the process by which she reached her highly individual artistic expression.

"I grew up pretty much as everybody else grows up and one day seven years ago found myself saying to myself - I can't live where I want to - I can't go where I want to - I can't do what I want to - . School and things that painters have taught me even keep me from painting as I want to. I decided I was a very stupid fool not at least to paint as I wanted to and say what I wanted to when I painted as that seemed to be the only thing that I could do that did not concern anyone but myself - that was nobody's business but my own. So these paintings and drawings happened and many others that are not here. I found that I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say in any other way - things I had no words for.

"One day I locked myself up in my room and held a private exhibition of everything I had painted, I noticed which paintings had been influenced by this painter, which by that one. Then I determined which of the finished pieces represented me alone. From that moment forward I knew exactly what kind of work I wanted to do. And I have been doing that for many years."

Georgia O'Keeffe was born in Sun Prairie, near Madison, Wisconsin, November 15, 1887, second child in a family of seven, Irish on her father's side, Hungarian and Knickerbocker-Dutch on her mother's. Both grandmothers were interested in painting and before she knew what it meant Georgia had made up her mind to become an artist.

Before she was ten she was being taught to copy flowers and draw from plaster casts. When she was fourteen her family moved to Williamsburg, Virginia and in 1904 she was graduated from the Chatham, Virginia, Episcopal Institute. The next autumn she enrolled in the Art Institute of Chicago and worked a year with John Vanderpoel, famous teacher of drawing. The year 1907-08 she spent in New York at the Art Students League, studying under William Merritt Chase, F. Luis Mora and Kenyon Cox.

The following year she was in Chicago, doing free lance commercial art. For several years she did almost no painting. In the summer of 1912 she went to the University of Virginia for a course in art teaching with Alon Bement. Then began her pedagogical period in art: supervising art in the public schools of Amarillo, Texas; art instructor in the summer school of the University of Virginia; and head of the art department of West Texas Normal College, Canyon, Texas. This period, interspersed with art courses at Columbia University under Alon Bement and Arthur Dow, lasted from 1912 until 1918, when she was forced by overwork to give up teaching.

From that year on Miss O'Keeffe has devoted her time to

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painting, making New York her headquarters. The summer of 1929 she spent in New Mexico where she now has a ranch, her second home. In 1932 she painted on the Gaspé Peninsula in Canada; in 1934 she went to Bermuda and was in Hawaii 1938-39 on an assignment. She holds the degree of Doctor of Fine Arts from William and Mary College, Virginia, and Doctor of Letters from the University of Wisconsin. Her paintings are owned by many museums in this country and in 1940 the Art Institute of Chicago held a retrospective exhibition of her work.

In the catalog Mr. Sweeney quotes from a considerable group of unpublished early correspondence--generously put at his disposal by Miss O'Keeffe--between the artist and her discoverer, Alfred Stieglitz. This interchange between an emerging artist and an extraordinarily discerning critic throws a revealing light both on the tendencies of American art in one of its most critical periods and on the evolving interest of an artist who has become one of the leading figures in American art today.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

Exhibition of
GEORGIA O'KEEFFE
May 14 - August 25, 1946

The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street, New York

1. ABSTRACTION NO. 9. 1915. Charcoal, 24 1/4 x 18 7/8". Lent by Alfred Stieglitz, New York.
2. NO. 10. - BLUE LINES. 1915. Watercolor, 25 x 19". Lent by Alfred Stieglitz, New York.
3. DRAWING NO. 11. 1915. Charcoal, 24 1/2 x 18 1/2". Lent by Alfred Stieglitz, New York.
4. 59TH STREET STUDIO. 1919. Oil on canvas, 35 x 29". Lent by the artist.
5. LAKE GEORGE WITH CROWS. c.1921. Oil on canvas, 28 1/4 x 25". Lent by the artist.
6. SPRING. 1922. Oil on canvas, 35 x 30". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Bryner-Schwab, New York.
7. CORN, DARK. 1922. Oil on composition board, 32 x 12". Lent by the artist.
8. TWO FIGS. 1923. Oil on board, 9 x 6 3/4". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Bryner-Schwab, New York.
9. GRAY LINE WITH BLACK, BLUE AND YELLOW. c.1923. Oil on canvas, 48 x 30 1/8". Lent by the artist.
10. PORTRAIT OF A DAY (3RD DAY). 1924. Oil on canvas, 32 x 25". Lent by the artist.
11. DARK ABSTRACTION. 1924. Oil on canvas, 25 x 21". Lent by the artist.
12. BIRCH AND PINE TREE. NO. 1. 1925. Oil on canvas, 35 x 22". Lent by the artist.
13. GREY TREE, LAKE GEORGE. 1926. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30". Lent by the artist.
14. LAKE GEORGE BARN. 1926. Oil on canvas, 21 x 31 3/4". Lent by the artist.
15. CITY NIGHT. 1926. Oil on canvas, 48 1/8 x 30". Lent by the artist.
16. OPEN CLAM SHELL. 1926. Oil on canvas, 20 x 9". Lent by the artist.
17. CLOSED CLAM SHELL. 1926. Oil on canvas, 20 x 9". Lent by the artist.
18. SHELL AND OLD SHINGLE. 1926. Oil on canvas, 9 x 7". Lent by the artist.
19. BLACK IRIS. 1926. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30". Lent by Alfred Stieglitz, New York.
20. EAST RIVER FROM THE SHELTON (30TH STORY). 1926. Oil on canvas, 12 x 32". Lent by the artist.
21. WHITE MORNING GLORY WITH BLACK. 1926. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30". Lent by Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., Cleveland, Ohio.
22. THE SHELTON WITH SUNSPOTS. 1926. Oil on canvas, 48 1/4 x 30 1/8". Lent by Mrs. Paul Lester Wiener, New York.
23. BLACK PETUNIA AND WHITE MORNING GLORY. NO. 1. 1926. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30". Lent by the artist.
24. SEAWEED. 1927. Oil on canvas, 7 x 9". Lent by Alfred Stieglitz, New York.

Abstraction - White Rose, No. 2

- 25. (BALLET SKIRT,) 1927. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30". Lent by the artist.
- 26. LINE AND CURVE. 1927. Oil on canvas, 32 x 16". Lent by the artist.
- 27. ABSTRACTION - WHITE ROSE. 1927. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30". Lent by the artist.
- 28. BLACK ABSTRACTION. 1927. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40". Lent by Alfred Stieglitz, New York.
- 29. LAKE GEORGE WINDOW. 1927. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30". Museum of Modern Art, Bequest of Richard D. Brixey (by exchange).
- 30. RED POPPY. 1928. Oil on canvas, 7 x 9". Lent anonymously.
- 31. BROWN AND TAN LEAVES. 1928. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Robert R. Young, Newport, Rhode Island.
- 32. SINGLE LILY WITH RED. 1928. Oil on board, 12 x 6 1/4". Lent by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
- 33. BLACK CROSS, NEW MEXICO. 1929. Oil on canvas, 39 x 30". Lent by the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.
- 34. HICKORY LEAVES WITH DAISY. 1929. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40". Lent by the artist.
- 35. THIS AUTUMN. 1929. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30". Lent by the artist.
- 36. BLACK HOLLYHOCKS AND BLUE LARKSPUR. 1929. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40". Lent by the artist.
- 37. BLACK AND WHITE. 1930. Oil on canvas, 36 x 24". Lent by the artist.
- 38. RANCHOS CHURCH. 1930. Oil on canvas, 24 x 36". Lent by the artist.
- 39. JACK IN THE PULPIT. NO. 6. 1930. Oil on canvas, 36 x 18". Lent by the artist.
- 40. DARK MESA AND PINK SKY. 1930. Oil on canvas, 16 x 30". Lent by the artist.
- 41. CLAM SHELL. 1930. Oil on canvas, 24 x 36". Lent by the artist.
- 42. COW'S SKULL WITH RED. 1930-34. Oil on canvas, 36 x 40". Lent by the artist.
- 43. COW'S SKULL WITH CALICO ROSES. 1931. Oil on canvas, 36 x 24". Lent by the artist.
- 44. JIMSON WEED. 1932. Oil on canvas, 48 x 40". Lent by the artist.
- 45. WHITE CANADIAN BARN. NO. 2. 1932. Oil on canvas, 12 x 30". Lent by the artist.
- 46. DEER'S HORNS NEAR CAMERON. 1937. Oil on canvas, 36 x 40". Lent by the artist.
- 47. THE WHITE PLACE IN SHADOW. 1940. Oil on canvas, 30 x 24". Lent by the Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington, D.C.
- 48. PELVIS WITH THE DISTANCE. 1943. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 3/4". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. James W. Fesler, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- 49. CLIFFS BEYOND ABIQUIU. 1943. Oil on canvas, 30 x 23 7/8". Lent by the artist.
- 50. THE BLACK PLACE. 1943. Oil on canvas, 20 x 36". Lent by the artist.
- 51. COTTONWOOD. NO. 1. 1944. Oil on canvas, 30 x 36". Lent by the artist.
- 52. PELVIS SERIES. NO. 3. 1944. Oil on canvas, 48 x 40". Lent by the artist.
- 53. BLACK PLACE. NO. 1. 1944. Oil on canvas, 26 x 30". Lent by the artist.

- 54. PELVIS IV. 1944. Oil on canvas, 40 1/2 x 36". Lent by the artist.
- 55. THE BLACK PLACE. NO. 3. 1944. Oil on canvas, 36 1/8 x 40". Lent by the artist.
- 56. HILLS AND MESA TO THE WEST. 1945. Oil on canvas, 18 7/8 x 36". Lent by the artist.
- 57. BLUE AND RED HILLS. 1945. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40". Lent by the artist.

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Paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe

in Public Collections

Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington, D.C.	(6)
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, N.Y.	(1)
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio.	(1)
The Newark Museum, Newark, N.J.	(1)
The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.	(4)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.	(1)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.	(1)
Detroit Institute of Art, The ^{ANN} T ahill Collection, Detroit.	(1)
Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Mass.	(1)
The John Herron Institute, Indianapolis, Ind.	(1)
The Museum of the University of Minneapolis, Minn.	(2)
The Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, Ill.	(1)
Westminister Academy, S imsbury, Conn.	(1)
Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pa.	(1)

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One Man Exhibitions

of

Georgia O'Keeffe's Work

- 1916 - Exhibited with Charles Duncan and René Lafforty. (10 drawings by O'Keeffe.) "291", New York.
- 1917 - "291", New York.
- 1923 - Anderson Galleries, New York. (100 oils.)
- 1925 - A Group Show, Seven Americans. Anderson Galleries, New York.
- 1926 - The Intimate Gallery, New York. (50 recent paintings.)
- 1927 - The Intimate Gallery, New York.
- 1927 - Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York.
- 1928 - The Intimate Gallery, New York.
- 1929 - The Intimate Gallery, New York.
- 1930 - An American Place, New York.
- 1931 - An American Place, New York.
- 1932 - An American Place, New York.
- 1933 - An American Place, New York.
- 1934 - An American Place, New York. Retrospective Exhibition (1919-1934).
- 1935 - An American Place, New York.
- 1936 - An American Place, New York.
- 1937 - An American Place, New York.
- 1937 - American Womens Association, New York.
- 1938 - American Womens Association, New York.
- 1938 - College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.
- 1939 - An American Place, New York.
- 1940 - An American Place, New York.
- 1941 - An American Place, New York.
- 1942 - An American Place, New York.
- 1943 - An American Place, New York.
- 1943 - The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. Retrospective Exhibition.
- 1944 - An American Place, New York.
- 1945 - An American Place, New York.
- 1946 - An American Place, New York.

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Chronology

of

Georgia O'Keeffe

- 1887 - Born November 15, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin.
- 1901 - Family moved to Williamsburg, Virginia.
- 1904 - Graduated Chatham Episcopal Institute, Virginia.
- 1904-05 - Studied School of Art Institute of Chicago with John Vanderpoel.
- 1907-08 - Art Students League, New York; won Still Life prize in class of William Merritt Chase.
- 1909-10 - Chicago: Free lance commercial art.
- 1912 - Took teaching course Summer School University of Virginia with Alon Bement.
- 1912-16 - Supervisor of art, public schools, Amarillo, Texas - 1912-14.
Instructor Summer School University of Virginia - 1913-16.
- 1915 - Teaching Columbia College, South Carolina.
- 1916 - Took teaching course with Arthur Dow and Alon Bement, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.
Head of Art Department, West Texas State Normal College, Canyon, Texas.
First work exhibited at "291", New York.
- 1917 - First one-man show at "291", New York; first trip to New Mexico.
- 1918 - San Antonio, Texas; New York.
- 1923 - Exhibition at Anderson Galleries, New York, 100 paintings.
- 1924 - Combined exhibition photographs of Alfred Stieglitz, oils by O'Keeffe, Anderson Galleries, New York; marriage with Stieglitz.
- 1929 - First summer in New Mexico.
- 1932 - Gaspé Peninsula, Canada.
- 1934 - Bermuda.
- 1938-39 - Hawaii on ^{assignment} ~~consignment~~ for Dole Pineapple Company.
- 1939 - Design for Steuben Glass, Inc.; degree Doctor of Fine Arts, William and Mary College, Virginia.
- 1940 - Retrospective exhibition, Art Institute of Chicago.
- 1942 - Degree of Doctor of Letters, University of Wisconsin.

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GEORGIA O'KEEFFE: RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

May 15 - August 25, 1946

The following excerpts are from the biographical critical text of the illustrated book *Georgia O'Keeffe* in preparation by James Johnson Sweeney, director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, who has selected and arranged the exhibition.

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

An expression of intense emotion, stark but always constrained, is the essence of O'Keeffe's art. And the way she came to this was by the severest critical self-stripping.

"I grew up," as she explained in 1923, "pretty much as everybody else grows up and one day seven years ago found myself saying to myself - I can't live where I want to - I can't go where I want to - I can't do what I want to -. School and things that painters have taught me even keep me from painting as I want to. I decided I was a very stupid fool not at least to paint as I wanted to and say what I wanted to when I painted as that seemed to be the only thing that I could do that did not concern anyone but myself - that was nobody's business but my own. So these paintings and drawings happened and many others that are not here. - I found that I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say in any other way - things I had no words for..!"*

"One day I locked myself up in my room and held a private exhibition of everything I had painted. I noticed which paintings had been influenced by this painter, which by that one. Then I determined which of the finished pieces represented me alone. From that moment forward I knew exactly what kind of work I wanted to do. And I have been doing that for many years."

Georgia O'Keeffe was born in Sun Prairie, near Madison, Wisconsin, on November 15th, 1887. She was the second child of a family of seven: four sisters and two brothers. Her father, Francis O'Keeffe, was of Irish extraction; her mother, Ida Totto, was of Hungarian and Knickerbocker Dutch lineage. Her maternal grandfather had served as an aide-de-camp to the famous Hungarian revolutionary Louis Kossuth; and her maternal grandmother's ancestors were among the earliest Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam, having come to America in 1638.

Both O'Keeffe's grandmothers were interested in painting. And Georgia at the age of ten, with two younger sisters, was already being taught to copy pansies and roses and to draw from plaster casts. From the outset she had set her heart on becoming an "artist" - with only the vaguest notion of what she meant by the term. Nevertheless one of the deepest impressions that has remained with her from her early school years is a scolding she was given in art class at the Sacred Heart Academy in Madison "for drawing too small."

In 1901 her family moved to Williamsburg, Virginia; she followed the year after and graduated from the Chatham, Virginia, Episcopal Institute in 1904.

The next autumn she enrolled in school of the Art Institute of Chicago and worked there a year with John Vanderpoel. Vanderpoel was a famous teacher of drawing. And his emphasis on line possibly left a lasting impress on O'Keeffe's style. The winter of 1907 and 1908 she spent in New York at the Art Students' League studying with William Merritt Chase, F. Luis Mora and Kenyon Cox. In Chase's class she won the Still Life prize. She was a favorite among her fellow

* Introduction to catalog of "Alfred Stieglitz presents one hundred pictures, oils, watercolors, pastels, drawings by Georgia O'Keeffe, American."

students. Eugene Speicher won his first formal recognition and the Kelly Prize for his portrait of "Patsy" O'Keeffe as she was known. She wanted to return to the League the next Fall. But now for the first time her parents refused to let her have her way. Nettled by the disappointment, she packed up at once and set off for Chicago, where she had an aunt and uncle, and remained there a year doing free-lance commercial work.

But in spite of O'Keeffe's need to earn a livelihood, commercial art had very little attraction for her. For several years she practically abandoned painting. Then in the summer of 1912 she returned to school at the University of Virginia for a course in art teaching with Alon Bement. From 1912 to 1914 she filled the post of supervisor of art for the public schools of Amarillo, Texas. In 1914 and 1915 she attended Teachers College at Columbia University, New York, and served as instructor at the Summer School of the University of Virginia. In 1915 she taught a term at Columbia College, South Carolina. And finally in the spring of 1916 returned to New York to take further courses with Alon Bement and Arthur Dow at Columbia University Teachers College in preparation for a position as head of the Art Department of West Texas Normal College, Canyon, Texas, where she remained until she was forced by overwork to give up teaching in 1918.

1912. Arthur Dow's Methods

Meanwhile her interest in painting had reawakened. Chase's teaching at the League had probably much to do with her temporary discouragement. She saw little point in learning to paint merely to copy nature, or to repeat what Hals had done, what Sargent had done, or what Messonier had done. "In school" as she said, "I was taught to paint things as I saw them. But it seemed so stupid. If one could only reproduce nature, and always with less beauty than the original, why paint at all? Always I wanted to be an artist, but now I decided to give it up. I put away my paints and brushes." It was only on her introduction to Arthur Dow's theories through the teaching of Alon Bement, that O'Keeffe felt she had at last found a way to realize her ideal of painting primarily as a means of self-expression and was encouraged to resume her work.

Arthur Dow in the 'eighties had studied in Paris and had won awards in the Salon. In 1887 he was among the group of young painters at Pont-Aven in Brittany, where he knew Gauguin. At the time Gauguin and his friends were seeking a unification of the picture surface through a flat ornamental emphasis and a return to the simplified drawing of the primitives, as well as the shadowless space and unrealistic drawing of the Japanese and Chinese.

In the introduction to his text book Composition, which may be said without exaggeration to have molded the taste of a generation, but which today is practically forgotten, Dow recounted:

"Some nine years ago, after a course in the schools of Paris, in the hope of finding more light on composition in painting, and, incidentally, a better method of teaching than the prevailing nature copying, while seeking for examples of Japanese art, I met Professor Ernest F. Fenollosa, then curator of the unrivalled Oriental collection in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

"He (Fenollosa) had exceptional opportunities for critical knowledge of both Eastern and Western Art, and as a result of his research and comparisons, guided by a brilliant mind's clear grasp of fundamental ideas, had gained a new conception of art itself. He believed music to be in a sense, the key to the other fine arts since its essence is beauty; that space art may be called 'visual' music, and may be criticized and studied from this point of view."

One of the fundamental theses of Dow's method was "Art is decadent when designers and painters lack inventive power and merely imitate nature or the creations of others. Then comes realism, conventionality, and the death of art..." And this was undoubtedly what caught O'Keeffe's response in her revolt from the conventional art school practice of Chase's teaching. A pedantic liberalism was no longer a requisite. The way was open for her to a free pictorial expression. This is what she had been looking for. As she was to declare a few years later "Singing has always seemed to me the most perfect means of expression. It is so spontaneous. And after singing, I think the violin. Since I cannot sing I paint." Dow's approach for her was "a fresh statement of design in terms of line, dark and light pattern," and color. She began to see painting as a language and these elements primarily as expressive elements - for her more eloquent than words, more articulate than notes of music.

1912-1915: Texas and New York

The next two years O'Keeffe spent in Amarillo, Texas, as supervisor of

art in the public schools of the city. But this interest awakened by Bement in his summer school lectures at the University of Virginia kept alive. And when an opportunity came to return to New York in the autumn of 1914, she at once enrolled in Teachers' College at Columbia University, where Bement and Dow were both lecturing.

But New York in these years was full of new interests. The Armory Show had taken place the year before. Newspapers, periodicals and art gatherings were still echoing the discussions provoked by the cumulative force of that remarkable gathering, as well as by individual items such as Marcel Duchamp's The Nude Descending a Staircase, or the post-fauve oils of Henri Matisse. Kandinsky's statement of his theories, The Art of Spiritual Harmony, with its emphasis on expressionism and the basic relationship of music and painting had just been published in an English translation by M. T. H. Sadler. Arthur Jerome Eddy, one of the most enthusiastic patrons of the Armory Show, had published a discursive study of the new tendencies it had illustrated: Cubists and Post Impressionism. In the fall of 1912 a new reviewer, Henry McBride, who genuinely appreciated the contemporary explorations in the arts, had joined the staff of the New York Sun. And in 1915 Willard Huntington Wright, author of the monthly art chronicle of the Forum, published Modern Painting, a survey of recent and contemporary tendencies in painting put forward as an apologia for the abstract "Synchromist" paintings of his brother, S. Macdonald Wright, and Morgan Russell.

Since 1905 the Photo-Secession Gallery "291" under the direction of the internationally known photographer Alfred Stieglitz had been exhibiting the latest interests from abroad as well as some of the boldest work in native sculpture, painting and photography. Stieglitz had been a pioneer in photographic art and was a champion of the new in every field. For Stieglitz the gallery was more than an exhibition space: he thought of it rather as a "laboratory". Marsden Hartley described it as "probably the largest small room in the world." In it Stieglitz had given America the first public display of Cezanne watercolors, the first exhibitions of work by Matisse and Picasso and the first display of African negro sculpture. Edward Steichen had written Stieglitz from Paris about a group of Rodin drawings; Stieglitz had cabled him to send them over at once. Max Weber, who had been a friend of Henri Rousseau, "le douanier", in Paris, arranged the first memorial exhibition of Rousseau's work under Stieglitz' sponsoring. Young Americans also were welcome. And Stieglitz in "291" was the first to give one man exhibitions to such native artists as Maurer, Marin, Hartley, Dove, Carles, Fruch, Bluemner, Nadelman and S. Macdonald Wright. His exhibition of "Younger American Artists" in 1910 was the first modern group show. And his periodicals 291 and Camera Work, which embraced art and literature as well as photography, were the most radical publications of their kind in America.

O'Keeffe had come to New York looking for just such stimuli. She was aware of what was happening around her. But as a student teacher at Columbia she found little opportunity to enter this world. Her visits to "291" only whetted her appetite. And she went back to the University of Virginia that summer, still searching - much less satisfied than she had been a year earlier that she was on the right track - yet grateful both to Dow and to Bement for the door they had opened to her. As she wrote a Teachers College friend, Anita Pollitzer, that August, "Pa Dow is a sweet old man. He is so nice he puts my teeth on edge at times. But I will admit he is nice - even when I want to slap him on the back and say 'Wake up old boy - don't let them feed you too many sugar plums.' In that Color Printing class I used to nearly go crazy - they all flattered him so much - And I was liking such snorting things, his seemed so disgustingly tame to me." And in another letter of the same month, "Alan is a funny little fellow, but I like the way he teaches --- I wouldn't be "arting" now if it wasn't for him - and as it is the most interesting thing in life to me I ought to thank him. He told me this summer that I didn't have a bit of respect for him, then nearly killed himself laughing. - But it isn't so. I really think a lot of him."

"The magazine 291 came and I was so crazy about it that I sent for number 2 and 3. - I think they are wonderful - they just take my breath away - it is almost as good as going to "291". I subscribed to it. I got Arthur Jerome Eddy's book a long time ago - and sent to The Masses for Kandinsky's but haven't been able to get it. They said they couldn't find out who published it. Wish you would tell me. - Tell me when you get hold of anything interesting."

"Tell me," she wrote in another letter to Anita Pollitzer that same summer, "do you like my 'music'? I didn't make it to music - It's just my own tune - It is something I wanted very much to say to someone..." And again: "Anita - do you know - I believe I would rather have Stieglitz like something - anything I had done - than anyone else I know of - I have always felt that - If I ever make anything that satisfies me even ever so little - I am going to show it to him to find out if it is any good. Don't you often wish you could make something he would like?"

"Still Anita - I don't see why we ever think of what others think of what we do - no matter who they are - isn't it enough just to express yourself?"

"If it were to a particular person as music often is - of course we would like them to understand - at least a little - but why should we care about the rest of the crowd - If I make a picture to you why should I care if anyone else likes it or is interested in it or not..."

1915: Columbia College, South Carolina.

In the autumn of 1915 O'Keeffe took a post at Columbia College in South Carolina. Shortly after establishing herself there she sent a batch of recent drawings to New York through a friend to Anita Pollitzer. Then it seemed as if events began to run one on the heels of another.

October, 1915

Anita -- I feel bothered about that stuff I sent Dorothy. I wish I hadn't sent it - I always have a curious sort of feeling about some of my things - I hate to show them - I am perfectly inconsistent about it - I am afraid people won't understand - and I hope they won't - and I hope they won't - and am afraid they will.

Then too they will probably be all mussed up -

But it can't be helped - they are at your mercy - do as you please with them -

I am starting all over now -

Have put everything I have ever done away and don't expect to get any of it out ever again - or for a long time anyway. I feel disgusted with it all and am glad I'm disgusted.

Nov. 4 - 1915

Dear Anita:

There seems to be nothing for me to say except thank you - very calmly and quietly.

I could hardly believe my eyes when I read your letter this afternoon -- I haven't been working - except one night - all during the holidays - that night I worked till nearly morning - the thing seems to express in a way what I wanted it to but - it also seems rather effeminate - it is essentially a woman's feeling - satisfies me in a way -- I don't know whether the fault is in the execution or with what I tried to say -- I've doubted over it -- and wondered over it till I had just about decided it wasn't any use to keep on amusing myself ruining perfectly good paper trying to express myself -- I wasn't even sure I had anything worth expressing - there are things we want to say - but saying them is pretty nervy - What reason have I for getting the notion that I want to say something and must say it. --

Of course marks on paper are free - free speech - press - pictures all go together I suppose - but I was just feeling rather downcast about it -- and it is so nice to feel that I said something to you and to Stieglitz. I wonder what I said -- I wonder if any of you got what I tried to say -- Isn't it damnable that I can't talk to you. If Stieglitz says any more about them - ask him why he liked them.

Anyway, Anita -- it makes me want to keep on -- and I had almost decided it was a fool's game.

Of course I would rather have something in 291 than any place in New York - but wanting things living is simply wanting your vanity satisfied -- of course it sounds good but what sounds best to me is that he liked them -- I don't care so much about the rest of it -- only I would be interested in knowing what people get out of them -- if they get anything. - Wouldn't it be a great experiment -- I'll just not even imagine such luck - but I'll keep on working anyway.

----- Anita, I can't begin to tell you how much I have enjoyed that Camera Work, Gertrude Stein number. It surprised me so much - and you know how much I love what is inside of it -- that Picasso drawing is wonderful music, isn't it -- Anita -- I like it

so much that I am almost jealous of other people even looking at it -- and I love the Gertrude Stein portrait - the stuff simply fascinates me - I like it all - you know how much without my trying to tell you --

-- The word word food seems to express what it gives me more than anything else -----

I am glad you showed the things to Stieglitz - but how on earth am I ever going to thank you or get even with you ---

Georgia

Feb. 1 - 1916

Mr. Stieglitz --

I like what you write me - Maybe I don't get exactly your meaning -- but I like mine - like you liked your interpretation of my drawings.

It was such a surprise to me that you saw them --- and I am so glad they surprised you - that they gave you joy. I am glad I could give you once what 291 has given me many times --

You can't imagine how it all astonishes me.

I have just been trying to express myself ----- I just have to say things you know --- Words and I - are not good friends at all except with some people - when I'm close to them and can feel as well as hear their response --- I have to say it someway - Last year I went color mad --- but I've almost hated to think of color since the fall went -- I've been slaving on the violin - trying to make that talk -- I wish I could tell you some of the things I've wanted to say as I felt them.

The drawings don't count ---- it's the life - that really counts -- to say things that way may be a relief -- It may be interesting to see how different people react to them ---- I am glad they said something to you. - I think so much alone - work alone - am so much alone - but for letters - that I am not always sure that I'm thinking straight -- It's great - I like it - the outdoors is wonderful - and I'm just now having time to think things. I should have thought long ago - the uncertain feeling that some of my ideas may be near to insanity - adds to the fun of it - and the prospect of really talking to some live human beings again - sometime in the future is great ----- Hibernating in South Carolina is an experience that I would not advise anyone to miss. The place is of so little consequence -- except for the outdoors - that one has a chance to give one's mind, time, and attention to anything one wishes.

I can't tell you how sorry I am that I can't talk to you -- What I've been thinking surprises me so - has been such fun - at times has hurt too - that it would be great to tell you:

Some of the fields are green - very very green -- almost, unbelievably green against the dark of the pine woods -- and its warm - the air feels warm and soft - and lovely ---

I wonder if Marin's Woolworth has spring fever again this year - I hope it has.

Sincerely

Georgia O'Keeffe

(on the back):

I put this in the envelope - stretched - and laughed.

It's so funny that I should just write you because I want to. I wonder if many people do. -- You see - I would go in and talk to you if I could - and I hate to be outdone by a little thing like distance.

O'Keeffe's friend Anita Pollitzer had brought the drawings she received from South Carolina to "291". Stieglitz was instantly impressed. "Finally a woman on paper", as he expressed it. He kept them. Then in May of the spring following put ten of them on exhibition with works by Charles Duncan and Rene Lafferty.

This was O'Keeffe's debut. The year following, 1917, Stieglitz gave her a one-man show in "291" - the last exhibition before the gallery was shut down. In 1923 he presented "One hundred pictures oils watercolors pastels drawings by Georgia O'Keeffe American".

The following year Stieglitz and O'Keeffe were married. And each year since 1925 she has held an exhibition of her work at the "Intimate Gallery" until 1930 and since then in "An American Place".

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