



GEORGIA O'KEEFFE | Poppy, 1927 • Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg



When you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for the moment. I want to give that world to someone else.

Georgia O'Keeffe

American artist Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) is known for her paintings of flowers, bones, shells, stones, leaves, trees, mountains, and other natural forms.

Painted in 1930, O'Keeffe's series of six canvases depicting a jack-in-the-pulpit shows the artist's deep interest in the design of nature. She bequeathed *Jack-in-the-Pulpit II–VI* to the National Gallery of Art in 1987, and the works are on view in the East Building.

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV* (detail), 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

who?
what?
how?

Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. II



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. II*, 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. III*, 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. III



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV*, 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. V*, 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

1 Inspiration from nature

O'Keeffe first painted flowers when she was a child growing up in rural Wisconsin. She decided to be an artist at the age of twelve, and during her long career (she lived to be 99 years old!), she made over 200 flower paintings. Some of O'Keeffe's favorite subjects were lilacs, daisies, irises, petunias, calla lilies, orchids, sunflowers, roses, and jack-in-the-pulpits.

O'Keeffe was first introduced to jack-in-the-pulpits by her high school art teacher during a lesson. Her teacher pointed out the plant's strange shapes and color variations. O'Keeffe said, "This was the first time I remember examining a flower... she started me looking at things—looking very carefully at details. It was certainly the first time my attention was called to the outline and color of any growing thing with the idea of drawing or painting it."

In 1930 O'Keeffe found jack-in-the-pulpits in the woods near her summer home at Lake George (in upstate New York) and was inspired to create a series of paintings.

2 A unique flower

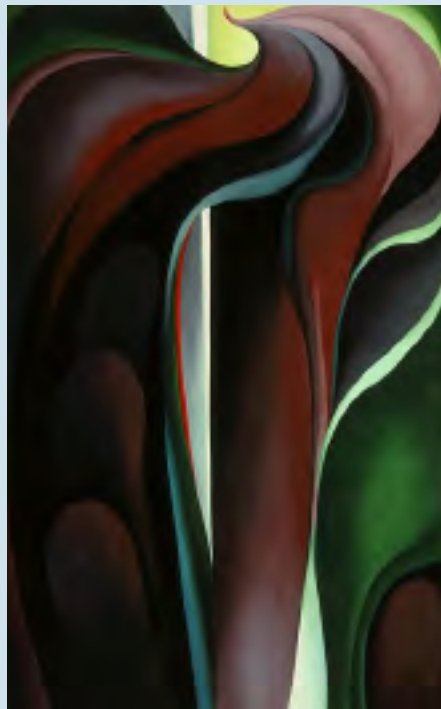
The jack-in-the-pulpit is a North American wildflower found in shady, cool woods and swamps and can grow between one and three feet tall. The plant begins as a sort of green vase (called a spathe), made from a single leaf, with a stalk (called a spadix) growing up in the middle of it. A leaf-hood folds gracefully over its top to protect the tiny flower from the wind and rain. Typically green with deep purple or red-brown stripes, the flower blooms from April through June. During the late summer and early autumn, the stalk grows a cluster of red berries.

It was named jack-in-the-pulpit because in early New England many pulpits were covered. The preacher stood inside very much like the way the spadix sits inside the hooded spathe.

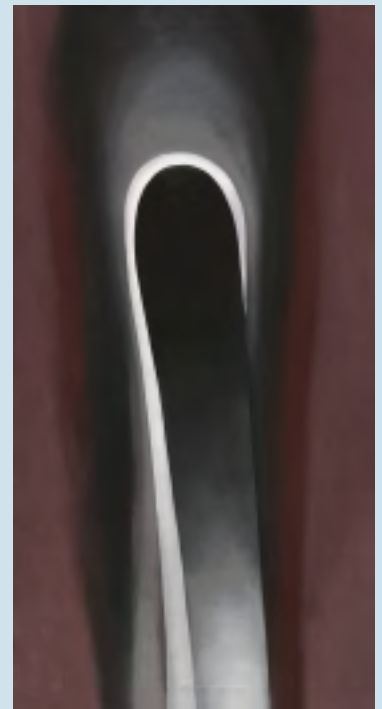
Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. iv



Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. v



Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. vi



3 A closer look

Concentrating on a single flower, O’Keeffe invites us to contemplate the intricate structure of the jack-in-the-pulpit. Some of the paintings show curling leaves and sky, and in others the flower fills the entire canvas. Each painting in the series brings us closer inside the center of the flower; with *No. VI*, we see only the jack/spadix.

O’Keeffe focuses our attention on the flower by magnifying and simplifying its form.

“It is only by deduction, by elimination, by emphasis, that we get at the real meaning of things.”

Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O’Keeffe*, 1925, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection

Photographer Alfred Stieglitz exhibited O’Keeffe’s work in New York City. They were married from 1924 until his death in 1946, and O’Keeffe gave a collection of Stieglitz’s photographs to the National Gallery.

4 Explore with your own eyes

Compare the five paintings. Look at the colors used for each painting.

Which two paintings are the most similar? How?

Which two are most different?

Which one interests you the most? Why?



booknook

These books about Georgia O'Keeffe can be found at your local library or bookstore.

My Name is Georgia

By Jeanette Winter | ages 4 and up

Georgia's Bones

By Jen Bryant, illustrated by Bethanne Anderson | ages 4 and up

Through Georgia's Eyes

By Rachel Rodríguez, illustrated by Julie Paschkis | ages 4 and up

Georgia O'Keeffe

By Mike Venezia | ages 6 and up

Georgia O'Keeffe: Portraits of Women Artists for Children

By Robyn Montana Turner | ages 6 and up

Georgia O'Keeffe: The "Wideness and Wonder" of Her World

By Beverly Gherman | ages 9 and up

Georgia O'Keeffe

By Ruth Thomson | ages 9 and up

Georgia O'Keeffe

By Linda Lowery, illustrated by Rochelle Draper | ages 9 and up

The Spirit Catchers: An Encounter with Georgia O'Keeffe

By Kathleen Kudlinski | ages 12 and up

try this! activity

Nature Study

O'Keeffe picked up seashells as she walked along the beach. She displayed her collection at her home in New Mexico, often drawing her favorite shells. By surrounding herself with objects from nature, she could make careful observations, analyzing shapes and patterns and recording colors and essential details.

O'Keeffe believed that "to see takes time like to have a friend takes time." It takes a lot of careful looking to get to know something well.



top: Georgia O'Keeffe, *The Shell*, 1934, National Gallery of Art, Washington, From the Collection of Dorothy Braude Edinburg

above: Georgia O'Keeffe, *Shell No. 1*, 1928, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

Make a series of drawings

You will need:

A pad of paper

A pencil, colored pencils, crayons, colored chalk, pastels, markers, and/or watercolors

First, select something from nature to study—a flower, leaf, shell, or stone. Set it on a table and sit nearby with your pad and drawing materials. Examine the object carefully. Study the colors, shapes, patterns, and designs. Consider what makes the object unique.

Make a series of drawings exploring this object. With each drawing, try to fill the entire sheet of paper.

Experiment with color

- Try drawing the object with only a pencil, using no colors.
- Then, draw the object with colors that are as close to the natural object as possible.
- Next, draw the object using only two colors—any two of your choice.
- Now, draw the object with any colors you want—use your imagination!

Explore design

- Make a drawing of the entire object.
- Then, make a drawing of a different view—turn the object around to show another side.
- Select a part of the object—just one detail—and draw that part as if you were looking at it with a magnifying glass.
- Imagine how the object would look to a fly—make a drawing showing a "bug's-eye" view of your object.

Finally, draw the object in an imaginary landscape. You may choose to include sky, water, land, animals, or buildings in your picture.

"Each shell was a beautiful world in itself... I have always enjoyed painting them—and even now, living in the desert, the sea comes back to me when I hold one to my ear."

HER LIFE

Georgia O'Keeffe

BIOGRAPHY **CHRONOLOGY**



Georgia O'Keeffe, by Dennis Brack, 1977

Georgia O'Keeffe was born on November 15, 1887, the second of seven children, and grew up on a farm in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. As a child she received art lessons at home, and her abilities were quickly recognized and encouraged by teachers throughout her school years. By the time she graduated from high school in 1905, O'Keeffe had determined to make her way as an artist.

O'Keeffe pursued studies at the Art Institute of Chicago (1905–1906) and at the Art Students League, New York (1907–1908), where she was quick to master the principles of the approach to art-making that then formed the basis of the curriculum—imitative realism. In 1908, she won the League's William Merritt Chase still-life prize for her oil painting *Untitled (Dead Rabbit with Copper Pot)*. Shortly thereafter, however, O'Keeffe quit making art, saying later that she had known then that she could never achieve distinction working within this tradition.

Her interest in art was rekindled four years later (1912) when she took a summer course for art teachers at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, taught by Alon Bement of Teachers College, Columbia University. Bement introduced O'Keeffe to Teachers College, artist and art educator Arthur Wesley Dow.

Dow believed that the goal of art was the expression of the artist's personal ideas and feelings and that such subject matter was best realized through harmonious arrangements of line, color, and notan (the Japanese system of lights and darks). Dow's ideas offered O'Keeffe an alternative to imitative realism, and she experimented with them for two years, while she was either teaching art in the Amarillo, Texas public schools (1912-14) or working summers in Virginia as Bement's assistant.

O'Keeffe was in New York again from fall 1914 to June 1915, taking courses at Teachers College. By the fall of 1915, when she was teaching art at Columbia College, Columbia, South Carolina, she decided to put Dow's theories to the test. In an attempt to discover a personal language through which she could express her own feelings and ideas, she began a series of abstract charcoal drawings that are now recognized as being among the most innovative in all of American art of the period. She mailed some of these drawings to a former Columbia classmate, who showed them to the internationally known photographer and art impresario, Alfred Stieglitz, on January 1, 1916.

Stieglitz began corresponding with O'Keeffe, who returned to New York that spring to attend classes at Teachers College, and he exhibited 10 of her charcoal abstractions in May at his famous avant-garde gallery, 291, which O'Keeffe knew he would do, but was uncertain of when. A year later, he closed the doors of this important exhibition space with a one-person exhibition of O'Keeffe's work. In the spring of 1918 he offered O'Keeffe financial support to paint for a year in New York, which she accepted, moving there from Texas, where she had been affiliated with West Texas State Normal College, Canyon, since the fall of 1916. By the time she arrived in New York in June, she and Stieglitz, who were married in 1924, had fallen in love and subsequently lived and worked together in New York (winter and spring) and at the Stieglitz family estate at Lake George, New York (summer and fall) until 1929, when O'Keeffe spent the first of many summers painting in New Mexico.

From 1923 until his death in 1946, Stieglitz worked assiduously and effectively to promote O'Keeffe and her work, organizing annual exhibitions of her art at The Anderson Galleries (1923–1925), The Intimate Gallery (1925–1929), and An American Place (1929–1946). As early as the mid-1920s, when O'Keeffe first began painting New York skyscrapers as well as large-scale depictions of flowers as if seen close up, which are among her best-known pictures, she had become recognized as one of America's most important and successful artists.

Three years after Stieglitz's death, O'Keeffe moved from New York to her beloved New Mexico, whose stunning vistas and stark landscape configurations had inspired her work since 1929. Indeed, many of the pictures she painted in New Mexico, especially her landscape paintings of the area, have become as well known as the work she had completed earlier in New York. Indeed, her ability to capture the essence of the natural beauty of northern New Mexico desert, its vast skies, richly colored landscape configurations and unusual architectural forms, has identified the area as "O'Keeffe Country." Indeed, the area nourished O'Keeffe's creative efforts from 1929 until 1984, when failing eyesight forced her into retirement. She lived either at her Ghost Ranch house, which she purchased in 1940, or at the house she purchased in Abiquiu in 1945. She made New Mexico her permanent home in 1949, three years after Stieglitz's death, and continued working in oil until the mid-1970s. She worked in pencil and watercolor until 1982 and produced objects in clay from the mid-1970s until two years before her death in 1986, at the age of 98.



HER LIFE
HER ART
HER HOUSES
AMERICAN MODERNISM

August 2009						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

Public Programs / Youth

2009 Art and Leadership Programs Exhibition
 August 10, 2009 10:00 AM - September 08, 2009 5:00 PM
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Special Events

Santa Fe 400th Anniversary Commemoration Kickoff Events
 September 04, 2009 12:00 AM - September 07, 2009 12:00 AM
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