* **2: Georgia O’Keefe**
* Photographed by her husband, photographer, Alfred Stieglitz
* **3: Series 1, No 3, 1918**
* **4. Music Pink and Blue II, 1918**
* The oil painting, Music, Pink and Blue No. 2 (1918) was painted during O'Keeffe's early exploration of abstraction. It was completed as O'Keeffe was transitioning from teaching in Texas to her career-launching life in New York. In 1915, O'Keeffe was introduced into the New York art scene when a friend shared a series of her highly abstract drawings with Alfred Stieglitz. Stieglitz exhibited ten of her drawings in a group show at his gallery, 291, which helped O'Keeffe gain recognition in the abstract expressionist movement.
* **5. Blue and Green Music 1919**
* O'Keeffe brought forth her own visual symphony in this image, not unlike Wassily Kandinsky, perhaps inspired by classical music. Kandinsky views the light blue color as the equal of the sounds of a flute, dark blue means chello, and an even darker blue would be an organ.
* **6. My Shanty, 1922**
* O’Keeffe was first introduced to the Lake George area in 1907, when she was a student at the Art Students League and received a scholarship to paint in the region. The old farm building was O’Keeffe’s summer studio.
* **7. Red Canna, 1924**
* In 1924, O'Keeffe began to make paintings in various sizes, all of which focused on the centers of flowers, and she continued making them for decades.
* **8. From the Lake, 1924**
* Here Georgia O'Keeffe pushes the landscape into abstraction, celebrating the rhythms and colors of a storm sweeping over Lake George.
* **9. Autumn Leave, Lake George, 1924**
* O'Keeffe collected organic souvenirs, from stones and shells to feathers and bones, and at Lake George she delighted in gathering leaves that appealed to her for the striking diversity of their shape and coloring. The majority of her leaf paintings exhibit a palette of browns, earthy reds, and shades of green, suggestive of autumn foliage, and, though enlarged and pressed close to and parallel with the picture plane, the leaves often retain their distinctive and identifiable shape. Autumn Leaves, Lake George, presents a bed of overlapping oak leaves whose forms are isolated and details magnified, drawing attention to the patches of summer's green that cling to the fiery reds and golden hues of fall, O'Keeffe's favorite season in the Adirondacks. She created twenty-nine leaf pictures between 1922 and 1931, all based on the leaves she collected at Lake George.
* **10. Petunias, 1925**
* **11.  The Shelton With Sunspots, 1926; New York City With Moon** 1925; Radiator Building, Night, New York 1927)
* Most well known for her portraits of erotic flowers and looming skulls, Georgia O'Keeffe was also haunted by cityscapes. She moved to New York City in 1918 to immerse herself in her art full-time at the invitation of Alfred Stieglitz, the gallery owner who supported her and would become her husband. Stieglitz held salons in a brownstone on 65th Street, where O'Keeffe was as likely to run into William Carlos Williams as Arthur Dove (though she didn't care for small talk with any guest). After her marriage to Stieglitz, the couple moved into the Shelton Hotel at 49th and Lexington. In 1925, the year they took up the new address, forty-five skyscrapers were constructed in New York, the most in one year. They lived in an apartment on the thirtieth floor of the Shelton for twelve years. O'Keeffe often painted what she saw from the window. In the first four years, she created thirty skyscraper paintings, [according](http://artsmia.org/education/teacher-resources/fivefacts_d.cfm?p=3&v=51" \t "_blank) to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.
* **12. Black Iris, 1926**
* **13. Abstraction White Rose, 1927**
* **14. Oriental Poppies, 1928**
* Flowers fascinated Georgia and they were her favorite subject on canvas. She seems to have liked particular flowers - the calla lily, poppy, canna, iris, petunia, and jimson weed. O'Keeffe painted **Oriental Poppies** in 1928. This stunning work was declared a groundbreaking, art masterpiece.   
    
  O'Keeffe was very much drawn to the abstract - and abstracting aspects of the flowers. She explores the elements of colour, shape and texture of the objects she paints. Which of these is most dominant seems to depend on the individual flower. She was preoccupied with simple forms from the very beginning and her earliest flower paintings. Colour is often bold, frequently carefully modulated but tends to come across as somewhat 'flat'.
* In "Oriental Poppies," O'Keeffe depicts two giant poppy flowers. Measuring 30" x 40", this oil painting is an explosion of brilliant colors on a vast canvas, lending a mesmerizing effect. O'Keefe used dazzling red and orange as the main color of the petals. The hollowed centre and the inner contours of the flowers are painted in deep purple. The skillful shading and velvety finish of the petals accentuates the vibrancy of the flowers. "Oriental Poppies" almost looks like a close up photograph. O'Keeffe did not give any background to the painting, to artfully draw focus onto the flowers. The absence of context in the painting presents them in a new light as pure abstracts. "Oriental Poppies" exudes a startling pull, as if casting a hypnotic spell on the viewer.
* Georgia O'Keeffe believed that due to the fast-paced lives people live, they merely glance at flowers, but never really observed their exquisiteness. She wished to give such rushing people experience and the feel of the true beauty of flowers. In her words,
* *Anyone who doesn't feel the crosses simply doesn't get that country. If I could paint the flower exactly as I see it no one would see what I see because I would paint it small like the flower is small. So 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 of flowers. ”*
* Georgia O’Keeffe’s ability to capture beauty that often went unobserved led to her receipt of the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the National Medal of Arts as well as election to the American Academy of Arts and Letter.   
    
  **Oriental Poppies** is now a part of a collection at the University of Minnesota Art Museum, Minneapolis.
* **15. Georgia O’Keeffe and her Siamese Cat at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico**
* **16. The Horse’s Skull on Blue, 1930**
* Most of O’Keeffe’s skulls were viewed frontally and symmetrically placed within the vertical canvases. While some were depicted against flat, dark grounds, O'Keeffe commonly placed her skulls on a fabric whose folds offered compositional interest and variety. **The Horse's Skull on Blue** (1930), one of the earliest skeletal paintings, is also among the simplest and most redolent of tradition.
* **17. Jack-in-the-Pulpit IV, 1930**
* This painting represents a midpoint in O’Keeffe’s process of concurrently increasing detail and abstraction. If O'Keeffe consistently found her strongest inspiration in nature, she believed that the immanence of nature could be discovered in and through the refinement of form. Thus in the jack-in-the-pulpits, abstraction becomes a metaphor of, and an equivalent for, knowledge -- the closest view of the flower yields an abstract image; the most profound knowledge of the subject reveals its abstract form.
* **18. Cow’s Skull with Calico Roses, 1930**
* The ragged mountain terrain with its fossilized formations, saturated color, and naked wilderness held inexhaustible fascination for O'Keeffe and was a source of inspiration for most of her artistic career.   
    
  GeorgiaO'Keeffe said of the sun-bleached bones and skulls she found in the desert:
* *To me they are as beautiful as anything I know. To me they are strangely more living than the animals walking around. The bones 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 with all its beauty ”*
* She made the small seem large and the large small as she focused on a single isolated object: a mountain, a stone, a flower, a bone. Educated in oriental scroll painting and influenced by the work of [Wassily Kandinsky](http://www.wassily-kandinsky.org/), she understood that emptiness could signify fullness, and she applied that principle in panoramic landscape paintings, as well as in lone objects placed in pictorial space.   
    
  Like [Frida Kahlo](http://www.fridakahlo.org/), with whom she maintained lively correspondence, O'Keeffe became intimately familiar with her subjects, wanting to merge and become one with them at the moment of creation. "I find that I have painted my life" she confided, "things happening in my life - without knowing".
* **19. Back of Marie’s No 4, 1931**
* **20. Ram’s Head with Holly Hock, 1935**
* In 1935, after a period of personal and professional stress during which she was absent from New Mexico and nearly abandoned her art, O'Keeffe returned to the Southwest. She was rejuvenated by the dramatic landscaped of the high desert country, and it showed in her canvases from that summer's sojourn. Ram's Head with Hollyhock announced this new freedom and inspiration.
* **21. Jimson Weed, 1936**
* "When you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for the moment," Georgia O'Keeffe once said. "I want to give that world to someone else." Throughout her long career that is just what she did, often rendering a flower or even a weed around her house in Abiquiu, N.M., in extreme close-up, so realistically and with such precision that they have a highly tactile quality. And flowers are what people associate Georgia O'Keeffe with most.   
    
  In 1936, cosmetics executive Elizabeth Arden commissioned O'Keeffe to paint **Jimson Weed** to hang in the exercise room of the new Arden Sport Salon in New York. The result was the largest of O'Keeffe's flower paintings. The artist placed the four blossoms in an exuberant design that repeats the tight rhythm of the pinwheel-shaped plant. She emphasized her subject's fresh beauty with a light, restricted palette.
* **22. Georgia painting in the back of her car**
* **23. Summer Days, 1936**
* In the 1930s and 1940s, O'Keeffe's reputation and popularity continued to grow, earning her numerous commissions. Her work was included in exhibitions in and around New York. O'Keeffe's most effective composition of bones in the landscape appeared in 1936, with Summer Days; the large canvas is also among her most ambitions evocations of the arid country of which she was by then an owner, having purchase the house at Ghost Ranch the preceding year. In 1933, O'Keeffe had written of the bones as "strangely more living than the animals walking around," and in the 1936 painting her response is given visual from. Summer Days, a painting featuring a deer's skull adorned with various wildflowers, against a desert background, became one of her most famous and well-known works.
* **24. Ram’s Head, Blue Morning Glory, 1938**
* When Georgia O'Keeffe first visited Northern New Mexico in 1917, she was hooked, like so many people who fall in the love with the landscape and its people. O'Keeffe returned to the region again and again, first buying a home at Ghost Ranch, and later a hilltop house nearby, in Abiquiu. In 1949, three years after the death of her husband, Alfred Stieglitz, the artist moved to the Land of Enchantment for good - to paint from her studio overlooking the dual winding ribbons of the road to Santa Fe and the Chama River.   
    
  By then the nation's most renowned woman artist, O'Keeffe, 62, knew the risk she was taking by leaving New York, the nexus of the art world. Her husband had been a celebrity in his own right, a pioneer of 20th-century photography and a gallery owner who introduced America to modernism - as well as to O'Keeffe. Without him, without New York, without her longtime circle of friends and patrons in the art world, what would happen to her career?   
    
  What happened is, of course, the stuff of legend. O'Keeffe did not shrivel up in the desert; instead, she flourished like the wild jimson weed she so often painted, inspired by the isolation and beauty of the natural environment surrounding her. Her longtime residence in New Mexico inexorably identified her with this state in the American mind.
* **25. Georgia in her home**
* **26. Georgia with Swiss Cheese, 1960**
* **27. Sky Above the Clouds, 1963**
* Among the most dramatic and well-known images of O'Keeffe's later years are her cloudscapes of the 1960s and '70s. Traveling around the world, she was exhilarated by the views seen from an airplane window. She described the changing patterns and colors as "breathtaking" and was moved to interpret these sights and feelings in paint. At first she painted contemplative pictures that showed the sky covered with a blanket of solid white clouds; later, a series of lively canvases filled with puffy white clouds and blue sky that stretch to infinity. O'Keeffe's Sky Above Clouds IV of 1965 was the most ambitious work in the series, and realized her long-time ambition to create a huge mural-size painting.
* **28. Georgia with Sky Above the Clouds**
* **29. Georgia in the desert with Red and Yellow**
* **30. Get Inspired**
* Among the great American artists of the 20th-century, Georgia O’Keeffe stands as one of the most compelling. For nearly a century, O’Keeffe’s representations of the beauty of the American landscape were a brave counterpoint to the chaotic images embraced by the art world. Her cityscapes and still lifes filled the canvas with wild energy that gained her a following among the critics as well as the public. Though she has had many imitators, no one since has been able to paint with such intimacy and stark precision.
* Georgia O’Keeffe was born in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin in 1887. The second of seven children, O’Keeffe longed to be an artist from an early age. In 1905 she attended the Art Institute of Chicago and a year later went to study at the Art Students League of New York. Though her student work was well received she found it unfulfilling, and for a short time abandoned the fine arts. She worked briefly as a commercial artist in Chicago before moving to Texas to teach. During the summer of 1915, O’Keeffe took classes at the Teachers College of Columbia University in South Carolina, and there began her re-entry into the world of painting.
* Teaching in South Carolina was Arthur Dow, a specialist in Oriental Art. Dow’s interest in non-European art helped O’Keeffe move away from the forms she had found so stifling in her previous studies. She said of him, “It was Arthur Dow who affected my start, who helped me to find something of my own.” Soon after O’Keeffe’s return to Texas, she made a handful of charcoal drawings, which she sent to a friend in New York. The friend, Anna Pollitzer, showed them to Alfred Stieglitz, a photographer and gallery owner. He was enthused with the vibrant energy of the work, and asked to show them. So, without her knowledge, Georgia O’Keeffe had her first exhibition in 1916 at Steiglitz’s “291 Gallery.”
* Within two years, Steiglitz had convinced O’Keeffe to move to New York and devote all of her time to painting. His regular presentations of her work had begun to cause a buzz, and create for a her a small following. Six years later the two were married, beginning one of the most fruitful and well-known collaborations of the modernist era. For the next twenty years the two would live and work together, Steiglitz creating an incredible body of portraits of O’Keeffe, while O’Keeffe showed new drawings and paintings nearly every year at the gallery. Living in Lake George, New York, and in New York City, O’Keeffe painted some of her most famous work. During the 1920s, her large canvasses of lush overpowering flowers filled the still lifes with dynamic energy and erotic tension, while her cityscapes were testaments to subtle beauty within the most industrial circumstances.
* In 1929 O’Keeffe took a vacation with her friend Beck Strand to Taos, New Mexico. The trip would forever alter the course of her life. In love with the open skies and sun-drenched landscape, O’Keeffe returned every summer to travel and to paint. When Steiglitz in 1946 died, O’Keeffe took up permanent residence there. More than almost any of her other works, these early New Mexico landscapes and still lifes have come to represent her unique gifts. The rich texture of the clouds and sky were similar to her earlier, more sensuous representations of flowers. But beneath these clouds one found the bleached bones of animals long gone.
* Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, O’Keeffe’s fame continued to grow. She traveled around the world and had a number of major retrospectives in the U.S. The most important came in 1970 at the Whitney Museum of American Art, placing her categorically as one of the most important and influencial American painters. The next year O’Keeffe’s vision deteriorated dramatically, and she withdrew from artistic life. It was not until 1973, after meeting Juan Hamilton, a young ceramic artist, which she returned to working. With his encouragement and assistance, she resumed painting and sculpting. In 1976 her illustrated autobiography, GEORGIA O’KEEFFE was a best seller, and the next year she received the Medal of Freedom from President Gerald Ford.
* In 1985 she received the Medal of the Arts from President Ronald Reagan. In March of the next year, at the age of 98, O’Keeffe passed away at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Georgia O’Keeffe’s work remains a prominent part of major national and international museums. For many, her paintings represent the beginnings of a new American art free from the irony and cynicism of the late 20th century.
* Georgia O’Keeffe’s enchanting floral still-lifes are now a deeply ingrained part of American culture—so much so that they often eclipse her other colorful accomplishments. For a more complete portrait of the artist, brush up on these 15 little-known facts about her.
* **1. FLOWER PAINTINGS MAKE UP A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF O'KEEFFE'S BODY OF WORK.**
* Though O'Keeffe is most famous for her lovingly rendered close-ups of flowers—like *[Black Iris](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/69.278.1" \t "_blank)*and *[Oriental Poppies](http://www.georgiaokeeffe.net/oriental-poppies.jsp" \t "_blank)*—these make up just about 200 of her 2000-plus paintings. The rest primarily depict landscapes, leaves, rocks, shells, and bones.
* **2. SHE REJECTED SEXUAL INTERPRETATIONS OF HER PAINTINGS.**
* For decades, critics assumed that O'Keeffe's flowers were intended as homages—or at the very least, allusions—to the female form. But in 1943, she insisted that they had it all wrong, [saying](http://www.okeeffemuseum.org/natural-and-still-life-forms.html" \t "_blank), “Well—I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flowers 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.” So there.
* **3. SHE WAS NOT A NATIVE OF THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST.**
* O'Keeffe was actually born on a Wisconsin dairy farm. She'd go on to live in Chicago; New York City; New York’s Lake George; Charlottesville, Virginia; and Amarillo, Texas. She first visited New Mexico in 1917, and as she grew older, her trips there became more and more frequent. Following the death of her husband in 1946, she moved to New Mexico permanently.
* **4. HER FAVORITE STUDIO WAS THE BACKSEAT OF A MODEL-A FORD.**
* In an interview with C-SPAN, [Carolyn Kastner](http://www.c-span.org/video/?310650-1/life-artwork-georgia-okeeffe" \t "_blank), curator of the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, explained how the artist customized her car for this use: "She would remove the driver's seat. Then she would unbolt the passenger car, turn it around to face the back seat. Then she would lay the canvas on the back seat as an easel and paint inside her Model-A Ford."
* Painting inside the car allowed O'Keeffe to stay out of the unrelenting desert sun, where she painted many of her later works. The Model-A also provided a barrier from the bees that would gather as the day wore on.
* **5. O'KEEFFE ALSO PAINTED SKYSCRAPERS.**
* While nature was her main source of inspiration, the time she spent in 1920s Manhattan spurred the creation of surreal efforts like *[New York With Moon](http://www.museothyssen.org/en/thyssen/ficha_obra/800" \t "_blank), [City Night](http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/3288/city-night" \t "_blank) and [The Shelton with Sunspots](http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/104031" \t "_blank).*
* **6. O'KEEFFE IMMERSED HERSELF IN NATURE ...**
* While in New Mexico O’Keeffe spent summers and falls at her Ghost Ranch, putting up with the region's hottest, most stifling days in order to capture its most vivid colors. (The rest of the year she stayed at her second home, located in the small town of Abiquiu.) When she wasn't painting in her Model-A, O'Keeffe often camped out in the harsh surrounding terrain, to keep close to the landscapes that inspired her.
* **7. …WHATEVER THE WEATHER.**
* The artist would rig up tents from tarps, contend with unrelenting downpours, and paint with gloves on when it got too cold. She went camping well into her 70s and enjoyed a well-documented rafting trip with photographer Todd Webb at age 74. Her camping equipment is occasionally exhibited at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe.
* **8. SHE MARRIED THE MAN BEHIND HER FIRST GALLERY SHOW.**
* "At last, a woman on paper!" That’s what modernist photographer and gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz cried when he first saw O'Keeffe's abstract charcoal drawings. He was so enthusiastic about this series of sketches that he put them on display—before consulting their creator.
* When O'Keeffe arrived at his gallery, she wasn't pleased, and brusquely introduced herself: "I am Georgia O'Keeffe and you will have to take these pictures down." Despite their rocky beginnings, Stieglitz and O'Keeffe quickly made amends, and went on to become partners in art and in life.
* **9. O'KEEFFE AND STIEGLITZ WROTE 25,000 PAGES OF LOVE LETTERS TO EACH OTHER.**
* When the pair met in 1916, he was famous and married; she was unknown and 23 years his junior. All the same, they began writing to each other often (sometimes two or three times a day) and at length (as many as 40 pages at a time). These [preserved writings](http://www.npr.org/2011/07/21/138467808/stieglitz-and-okeeffe-their-love-and-life-in-letters" \t "_blank) chart the progression of their romance—from flirtation to affair to their marriage in 1924—and even document their marital struggles.
* **10. SHE SERVED AS A MUSE TO OTHER ARTISTS.**
* Thanks in part to Stieglitz, O'Keeffe was one of the most photographed women of the 20th century. Stieglitz made O'Keeffe the subject of a long-term series of portraits meant to capture individuals as they aged, and she made for a striking model. Though he died in 1946, the project lived on as other photographers sought out O'Keeffe in order to capture the beloved artist against the harsh New Mexican landscapes she loved so dearly.
* O'Keeffe [later wrote](http://www.amazon.com/OKeeffe-Stieglitz-Critics-1916-1929-Barbara/dp/0226498247" \t "_blank):
* *When I look over the photographs Stieglitz took of me—some of them more than sixty years ago—I wonder who that person is. It is as if in my one life I have lived many lives. If the person in the photographs were living in this world today, she would be quite a different person—but it doesn't matter—Stieglitz photographed her then.*
* **11. SHE QUIT PAINTING THREE TIMES.**
* The first break spanned several years (the exact number is a matter of debate), when O'Keeffe took on more stable jobs to help her family through financial troubles. In the early 1930s, a nervous breakdown led to her hospitalization, and caused her to set aside her brushes for more than a year.
* In the years leading up to her death in 1986, failing eyesight forced O'Keeffe to give up painting entirely. Until then, she fought hard to keep working, enlisting assistants to prepare her canvas and mix her oil paints for pieces like 1977's *[Sky Above Clouds/Yellow Horizon and Clouds](http://contentdm.okeeffemuseum.org/cdm/ref/collection/gokfa/id/914" \t "_blank)*. She managed to use watercolors until she was 95.
* **12. AFTER GOING BLIND, SHE TURNED TO SCULPTING.**
* Although her vision eventually made painting impossible, O'Keeffe's desire to create was not squelched. She memorably declared, "I can see what I want to paint. The thing that makes you want to create is still there.” O'Keeffe began experimenting with clay sculpting in her late 80s, and continued with it into her 96th year.
* **13. SHE'S THE MOTHER OF AMERICAN MODERNISM.**
* Searching for what she called “[the Great American Thing](http://www.okeeffemuseum.org/about-georgia-okeeffe.html" \t "_blank),” O'Keeffe was part of the Stieglitz Circle, which included such lauded [early modernists](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/geok/hd_geok.htm" \t "_blank) as Charles Demuth, Arthur Dove, [Marsden Hartley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marsden_Hartley" \t "_blank), John Marin, Paul Strand, and Edward Steichen. By the mid-1920s, she had become the first female painter to gain acclaim alongside her male contemporaries in New York's cutthroat art world. Her distinctive way of rendering nature in shapes and forms that made them seem simultaneously familiar *and*new earned her a reputation as a pioneer of the form.
* **14. SHE BLAZED NEW TRAILS FOR WOMEN ARTISTS.**
* In 1946, O’Keeffe became the first woman to earn a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. Twenty-four years later, a Whitney Museum of American Art retrospective exhibit introduced her work to a new generation. Fifteen years after that, O'Keeffe was included in the inaugural slate of artists chosen to receive the newly founded [National Medal of Arts](http://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/18/arts/12-are-named-winners-of-new-u-s-arts-medal.html" \t "_blank) for her contribution to American culture.
* **15. SHE WASN'T FEARLESS, BUT SHE REJECTED FEAR.**
* O'Keeffe was purported to have said, "I've been absolutely terrified every moment of my life and I've never let it keep me from doing a single thing I wanted to do."