



Georgia O'KEEFFE

(1887 - 1986)

Georgia O'Keeffe was an American painter. She is most famous for her large paintings of flowers. She is considered to be the "Mother of American modernism". American modernism was an artistic and cultural movement that came about after World War 1.

Georgia's Childhood

Georgia was born on November the 15th 1887 in a farmhouse in the state of Wisconsin, U.S. Her parents were dairy farmers. She was the second of seven children.

By the young age of ten she had already decided to become an artist and received training along with her sister from a local artist called Sara Mann. Her professional training started at the School of Art Institute of Chicago from 1905 to 1906 and then at the Arts Student League in New York City. Georgia became frustrated and quit the dream of becoming an artist. She became a commercial artist in 1908 and didn't paint for four years!

Who and what inspired Georgia to paint again?

A talk about Arthur Wesley Don's exciting, innovative and modern ideas and artwork during a class at the University of Virginia's Summer School sparked a fresh way of thinking for Georgia. Harmonious line, colour and shade became the focus of her painting process.

She took classes from Arthur Wesley Don at the Teachers College of Columbia University from 1914 to 1915.



In 1916 she became the Head of the Art Department at West Texas State Normal College until 1918. For a woman at that time, it was a huge step forward and recognition for her talent and teaching experience.

While in Texas, Georgia began creating charcoal drawings.

Georgia gains recognition

Georgia's charcoal drawings were exhibited at the 291 Gallery in New York City which was owned by Alfred Stieglitz. He was mightily impressed by her drawings. In April 1916 he exhibited ten of her drawings in the gallery. The following year in 1917 Georgia had her first solo exhibition at 291.



'Blue and Green Music', 1921

The Beginnings of her Trademark Paintings

In the mid-1920s Georgia began working mainly in oil, creating large scale paintings of natural forms such as the insides of flowers. She also made paintings of the New York buildings.

In 1921, Georgia painted 'Blue and Green Music'.

In 1924 she painted 'Red Canna'. This is a beautiful, large-scale painting which sings with fire and light imagery.



'Red Canna', 1924

New Mexico Inspiration

To seek out new inspiration for her artwork, Georgia visited New Mexico every year from 1929 to 1949 and in 1940 she moved into a house on Ghost Ranch, North New Mexico. The beautiful cliffs inspired much of her painting.

Groundbreaking Work

Georgia had many commissions. She had two retrospective exhibitions: one was in 1946 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. It was significant because she was the first woman artist to have been given one there. She also received many honorary degrees from universities.



In 1977 President Gerald R. Ford presented Georgia with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. It is the highest award that can be given to American civilians.

Georgia's Legacy

Georgia's work helped pioneer a revolutionary art movement and showed the world that talent and perseverance, no matter your gender or background, will always prevail.

Her assets and studio are now owned by the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum which is in Santa Fe, New Mexico, U.S.

FACT: In November 2014 one of her paintings sold for over forty-four millions dollars!



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