

# A Timeline of Georgia O'Keeffe

1887-1986

1887-1899

**NOVEMBER 15, 1887**

Georgia is born on a dairy farm four miles southeast of Sun Prairie, WI.

**1899**

Shortly after turning 12, Georgia announces to her friend Lena, daughter of the neighborhood laundress: "When I grow up, I'm going to be an artist."

"When I grow up,  
I'm going to  
be an artist."

1900-1910

**1901**

Georgia is sent to boarding school, where, for an extra \$20, she receives lessons in painting.

**SEPTEMBER 1905**

Georgia travels to Chicago to attend the Art Institute of Chicago, where she studies to become an art teacher.

**FALL 1907**

Georgia travels to NYC to attend the Art Students League and to study with painters such as William Merritt Chase and F. Luis Mora.

**JANUARY 1908**

Georgia goes with a group of other students from the League to view an exhibit of Rodin drawings at a gallery called 291—and sees Alfred Stieglitz, famous photographer and modern art dealer, for the first time.

1911-1920

**1914**

Georgia travels to New York to study at Columbia Teachers College. She rents a tiny room for \$4 a week. That fall, she meets Anita Pollitzer.

**FALL 1915**

She takes a job teaching art at a small women's college in South Carolina. That fall, she creates a series of groundbreaking abstract charcoals that she rolls up and sends to Anita Pollitzer in New York.

**JANUARY 1, 1916**

Anita Pollitzer takes the rolled drawings to Alfred Stieglitz at 291, who says "they're the purest, finest, sincerest things that have entered 291 in a long while."

**EARLY JANUARY 1916**

Georgia writes to Stieglitz for the first time: "Mr. Stieglitz, If you remember for a week why you liked my charcoals . . . I would like to know."

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**JANUARY 20, 1916**

Stieglitz writes back and hints at a desire to meet.

**FEBRUARY 1, 1916**

From South Carolina, Georgia writes to Stieglitz in NYC: "I hate to be completely outdone by such a little thing like distance."

**MAY 23, 1916**

Stieglitz hangs some of Georgia's drawings in a group show at 291.

**SEPTEMBER 1916**

Georgia travels to Canyon, Texas, for a teaching job at the college there.

**WINTER 1916**

Georgia continues to create abstractions—watercolor paintings and charcoal drawings—which she continues to send to Stieglitz in New York.

**APRIL 3, 1917**

Stieglitz presents Georgia's first solo show at 291, and she makes her first sale: a charcoal abstract drawing of a train curving through the landscape.

**MAY 1917**

Receiving a letter from Stieglitz announcing his intention to close 291, Georgia withdraws her savings from the bank in Canyon and travels to New York. She shows up at 291 unannounced. Stieglitz rehangs her show—and takes photographs of her posed with her artwork.

**JUNE 1917**

Georgia returns to Texas.

**FALL 1917**

Georgia begins to feel increasingly trapped in Canyon. Her health failing, she is ordered by the doctor to go to a warmer climate in San Antonio.

**MAY 1918**

Stieglitz sends photographer Paul Strand out to Texas to assess Georgia's health.

**JUNE 8, 1918**

Georgia travels with Strand back to NYC—Stieglitz meets them at Grand Central and moves Georgia into his niece's small studio apartment on E. 59th Street.

**JULY 1918**

Stieglitz begins a serial portrait of Georgia—face, hands, body—images both clothed and nude.

**JULY 1918**

Stieglitz leaves his wife, Emmy, and moves into the small studio apartment with Georgia on E. 59th Street.

**AUGUST 1918**

Stieglitz brings Georgia to his family home in Lake George to meet his mother and family. Later that month, they become lovers.

**FALL 1918**

Stieglitz asks Georgia if she will stay in New York—he will arrange for her room and board and guarantee her freedom to paint if she will commit to staying for one year. They move back to the studio apartment in NYC.

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**JANUARY 1919**

Stieglitz begins to hold informal showings of Georgia's artwork—her watercolors and new oil paintings, and his photographs of her—at the E. 59th Street apartment.

**1920-1929**

**SUMMER 1920**

Georgia claims a small outbuilding on the Stieglitz property at Lake George—and renovates it to serve as her own private art studio.

**FEBRUARY 6, 1921**

Stieglitz opens a formal exhibition of his photographs, including 46 photographs of Georgia, many of them nudes. She becomes an overnight celebrity. In reviews, the photographs are described not only as artwork, but as personal, sensationalized documents of Georgia and Stieglitz's affair.

**APRIL 1921**

Three of Georgia's paintings are shown at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts—a show comprised mostly of male painters.

**SPRING 1922**

Georgia meets Beck Strand for the first time.

**JANUARY 1923**

Stieglitz holds the first major exhibition of Georgia's work in NYC at the Anderson Galleries—over 100 oils, watercolors, and drawings produced between 1915 and 1922. The show is a critical success but the work is reviewed in sexualized, Freudian terms—her abstractions interpreted through the lens of Stieglitz's photographs of her. Georgia is devastated, and angry.

**SPRING 1924**

Stieglitz stages a joint show of Georgia's paintings and his photographs—whereas his photographs are reviewed in more formal analytic terms, her work continues to be largely described in gendered terms.

**SUMMER 1924**

Georgia makes her first giant flowers—Stieglitz dismisses them as “silly” and “pretty.” She keeps painting them anyway.

**OCTOBER 1924**

Georgia pens a letter to Sherwood Anderson. Regarding the creative process she writes, “Whether you succeed or not is irrelevant, there is no such thing. Making your unknown known is the important thing—and keeping the unknown always ahead of you.”

**NOVEMBER 1924**

Against Stieglitz's advice and wishes, Georgia begins to paint scenes of NYC—including *New York Street with Moon*.

**DECEMBER 8, 1924**

Georgia and Stieglitz marry. In the ceremony, she refuses to say the word “obey.”

**MARCH 9, 1925**

Stieglitz mounts the largest exhibition he will ever hold: the Seven Americans show featuring works by key members of the Stieglitz circle including Arthur Dove, John Marin, Marsden Hartley, Charles Demuth, Paul Strand, Alfred Stieglitz, and Georgia O'Keeffe.

**FALL 1925**

Jean Toomer travels to Lake George with his lover Margaret Frank. After he leaves, Georgia makes a portrait of him in the form of a tree.

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### NOVEMBER 1925

Georgia and Stieglitz move into the Shelton—their rooms largely financed by the sale of her paintings.

### DECEMBER 1925

Stieglitz opens the Intimate Gallery, known simply as “The Room.”

### FEBRUARY 1926

Georgia’s 1926 show goes up. Her city painting *New York Street with Moon* sells on the opening day of the show for \$1,200.

### FEBRUARY 1926

Georgia travels to Washington, D.C., to speak to an audience of 500 at the National Women’s Party dinner.

### MARCH 1926

Blanche Matthias’s profile of Georgia is published in the *Chicago Evening Post*—it is the first article where Georgia feels that her vision and the intent of her art is portrayed correctly and in opposition to reviews that have portrayed her work in sexualized, gendered terms. She calls the Matthias piece “one of the best things that have been done on me” and makes copies to distribute.

### SUMMER 1926

Georgia catches Stieglitz kissing the cook at Lake George—she leaves abruptly and goes alone to York Beach, Maine.

### JANUARY 1927

Georgia’s show goes up—she begins to express reservations about the direction her work is taking—“I do not seem to be crystalizing anything this winter . . . I am not clear . . . I am not steady on my feet.”

### AUGUST 1927

Georgia is hospitalized for surgery to remove a lump in her breast.

### SEPTEMBER 1927

Without permission from Stieglitz or his family Georgia begins to remodel the house at Lake George—she has the walls painted gray and all curtains removed, and she takes out a part of the porch roof so there is more available light.

### NOVEMBER 1927

Young heiress Dorothy Norman starts to visit The Room and a relationship begins between her and Stieglitz.

### FEBRUARY 1928

Georgia meets Dorothy Norman for the first time.

### APRIL 1928

Stieglitz announces to the press that six of Georgia’s calla lily panels have sold for \$25,000.

### SPRING 1928

Norman visits the gallery almost every day—she and Stieglitz begin an affair.

### JULY 1928

Georgia travels alone to visit her sister Catherine in Wisconsin and to visit the farm where she grew up.

### FEBRUARY 1929

Georgia’s exhibition goes up and she writes to a friend, “I hope not to have an exhibition again for a long—long—long time.” Despite her reservations, the exhibition is highly praised.

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### APRIL 1929

Georgia and Beck Strand take the *20th Century Limited* to Chicago and from there travel on to New Mexico, where they stay with Mabel Dodge Luhan at her estate, Los Gallos.

### SPRING—SUMMER 1929

Georgia falls in love with the landscape and paints dozens of pictures; she learns how to drive and goes horseback riding and camping in the mountains. She visits the Grand Canyon. She confides in a friend: "I never feel at home in the East like I do out here. . . . And finally feeling in the right place again—I feel like myself—and I like it."

### AUGUST 25, 1929

Georgia returns to Lake George and she and Stieglitz are reunited. Seeing him again, she says, is "the most perfect thing."

### OCTOBER 1929

They are working—painting and printing photographs—at Lake George when they receive news of the stock market crash.

### DECEMBER 1929

Stieglitz opens a new gallery—An American Place.

## 1930-1939

### JANUARY 1930

Georgia's favorite brother Alexis dies.

### FEBRUARY 1930

Georgia's exhibition goes up, comprised mostly of her crosses, pueblo buildings, and landscapes of New Mexico. The show includes the painting *New York Night*, which will prove to be Georgia's last city picture of NYC.

### MARCH 1930

Georgia agrees to a public debate with editor of the populist *New Masses* in the Brevoort Bar in Greenwich Village.

### APRIL 1930

Alone at the Lake, Georgia makes her famous Jack in the Pulpit series.

### JUNE 8, 1930

She leaves New York to spend the summer in New Mexico, completing over thirty paintings in three months.

### FALL 1930

Stieglitz continues his affair with Dorothy Norman, who has become a fixture of An American Place. Georgia only visits the gallery to hang her shows.

### APRIL 1931

Georgia leaves two months early to travel to New Mexico. She rents a house from heiress Marie Garland in Alcalde, looking out across the plains toward the Jemez Mountains. On this trip, she discovers the small town Abiquiu. Her paintings of this trip are primarily paintings of landscapes and also of skulls and animal bones.

### LATE JULY 1931

Georgia returns to Lake George.

### NOVEMBER 1931

Georgia travels down from the Lake to NYC and comes upon Stieglitz photographing Dorothy Norman nude in their apartment at the Shelton.

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## 1887-1986

### FEBRUARY 1932

Stieglitz stages a forty-year retrospective of his own work including photographs of the changing New York City skyline, Lake George, and iconic pictures like *The Steerage*, along with his portraits of Georgia alongside portraits of his new younger lover, Dorothy Norman.

### MARCH 1932

Georgia is invited by the new Museum of Modern Art to submit a proposal for a mural competition. She wins the competition and is asked to create a permanent mural for the Radio City Music Hall.

### SUMMER 1932

The summer becomes a power struggle when Georgia signs a contract for the Radio City commission without Stieglitz's consent, and Stieglitz considers her action a betrayal.

### AUGUST 1932

Georgia drives with Stieglitz's niece Georgia Engelhard 150 miles north to Canada. They explore Montreal and the Gaspé Peninsula. It is Georgia's first trip outside the country.

### NOVEMBER 1932

Georgia starts work on the mural of the powder room. When the canvas pulls away from the plaster on the walls, she walks off the job and takes to her bed with chest pains, insomnia, and anxiety.

### FEBRUARY 1, 1933

Georgia is admitted to Doctors Hospital, and Stieglitz is instructed by her doctor not to visit.

### MAY 1933

After being released, Georgia travels to Lake George, where she will spend the summer and fall recuperating—she cannot paint.

### DECEMBER 1933

Jean Toomer comes to visit Georgia at the farmhouse in Lake George.

### FEBRUARY 1934

Georgia slowly begins to work again, starting with a very simple series of drawings.

### JUNE 1934

Georgia travels West to New Mexico. From Alcalde, she sets out in her black roadster to Ghost Ranch for the first time and falls in love with the place.

### SEPTEMBER 1934

Georgia returns to New York and Stieglitz. From this point on until 1946, her years will be divided in two—half spent with Stieglitz in New York, showing her work at his galleries—the other half in New Mexico.

### NOVEMBER 1935

Georgia drives cross-country from New Mexico home to New York—on her way, she stops in Canyon, Texas. She goes to the classroom where she had taught twenty years ago, walks to the files, picks out all the drawings of hers that remained there, and walks out with them.

### FEBRUARY 1938

*Life* magazine declares Georgia to be "America's most famous and successful woman artist."

### APRIL 1938

Stieglitz suffers a near fatal heart attack—debilitated, he continues to make prints from old negatives, but he can no longer take photographs.

### SUMMER-FALL 1938

Georgia travels on horseback through Yosemite with Ansel Adams and others.

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**JANUARY 1939**

After her January show, Georgia travels by ocean liner to Hawaii, where she paints numerous landscapes and paintings of plumeria, ginger, and hibiscus along with a commissioned work of a pineapple for the Dole Pineapple company.

**1940-1949**

**MAY 1946**

An Georgia retrospective opens at MoMA, the first major MoMA show dedicated to the work of a female artist, comprised of fifty-seven paintings that Georgia made between 1915 and 1945.

**JULY 10, 1946**

Stieglitz spends the morning writing letters at Georgia's desk and suffers a massive stroke. He is found hours later.

**JULY 13, 1946**

Stieglitz dies at 1:30 a.m.

**JUNE 1949**

After three years spent sorting through Stieglitz's estate, Georgia moves to New Mexico permanently.

**1950-1959**

**FEBRUARY 1951**

Georgia travels to Mexico with Spud Johnson where she stays with Diego Rivera and his wife, Frida Kahlo.

**1960-1969**

**JUNE 1965**

At age 77, Georgia designs and begins the largest painting of her career—8' x 24'—the canvas stretched and primed on the inside wall of her garage at Ghost Ranch. For over three months, she stands on a ladder, then on a chair, then on a box, then sits on the floor to work until *Sky Above Clouds IV* is finished.

**FALL 1967**

Anita Pollitzer sends Georgia the biography she has written of her for her acceptance. Georgia rejects it, and refuses to authorize publication. Their fifty-year friendship ends over this event.

**MARCH 1968**

Georgia graces the cover of *Life* magazine in the iconic photograph by John Loengard along with her painting *Cow Skull: Red White and Blue* and the caption "Stark Visions of a Pioneer Painter."

**1970-1979**

**OCTOBER 1970**

The Whitney Museum of Art holds a retrospective of Georgia's work—the first major NYC show of her work since Stieglitz's death 24 years before. From New York, the retrospective travels to Chicago and San Francisco.

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**1971**

Georgia begins to lose her central vision—she retains only peripheral sight. She completes only one painting this year.

**1972**

Georgia paints her last unassisted works in oil: *Black Rock with Blue Sky and White Clouds* and the haunting *The Beyond*.

**SEPTEMBER 1973**

Twenty-six-year-old Juan Hamilton arrives at her door, looking for work. He becomes her assistant and close friend; a potter, he teaches her to work in clay.

**1976**

With Juan's encouragement and support, Georgia creates an autobiography about her art and life—the book, published by Viking, is titled *Georgia O'Keeffe* and contains more than 100 reproductions of her work.

**FALL 1978**

An exhibition of Stieglitz's serial portrait of Georgia is organized and displayed at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Most of these photographs have not been seen publicly since the 1920s. In the show's catalog, Georgia writes: "When I look over the photographs Stieglitz took of me—some of them more than 60 years ago—I wonder who that person is. It is as if in my one life I have lived many lives."

**1980-1986**

**APRIL 1985**

Georgia is awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Ronald Reagan.

**MARCH 6, 1986**

Georgia dies.

### POSTSCRIPT:

At the time of her death, Georgia owned half of her known output, including 350 oil paintings and works on paper, and over 700 sketches. Her collection contained many of her early abstractions. In 1997, eleven years after her death, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe opened. The museum currently has in its collection over 900 works of Georgia, including 163 of her finished paintings. The museum also maintains her two homes—in Abiquiu and at Ghost Ranch—as well as archival collections, a library, and a research center. The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum partners with museums around the world on exhibitions of O'Keeffe's work, including *Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction*, which opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art in September, 2009. This summer, July, 2016, The Tate Modern will hold its first major retrospective of Georgia's work, 100 years after her first show in New York. The Tate states its goal to: "Review Georgia's work in depth and reassess her place in the canon of twentieth-century art, situating her within artistic circles of her own generation and indicating her influence on artists of subsequent generations."