



Dove/O'Keeffe

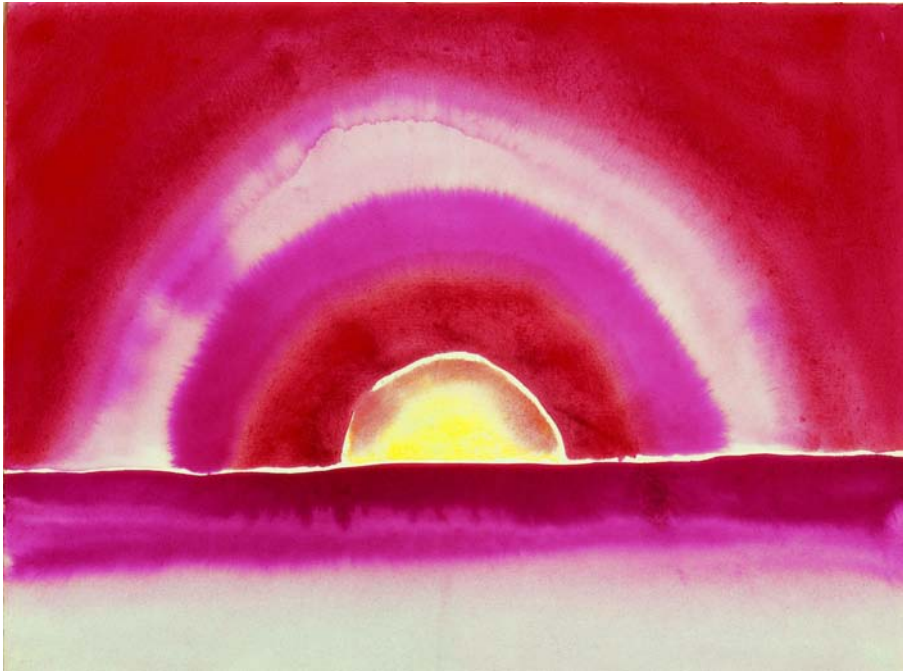
Circles of Influence

June 7–September 7, 2009



Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) is celebrated as one of the most significant American artists of the twentieth century. Yet one aspect of her early development is frequently overlooked: O'Keeffe credited the work of Arthur Dove (1880–1946) as her primary introduction to modern art. Dove, acknowledged as America's first abstract painter, used colorful, dynamic forms to reflect his communion with the natural world—a passion shared by O'Keeffe. Introduced to one another by the photographer and gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), Dove and O'Keeffe maintained a lifelong respect for each other's work. Over the course of several decades, their artistic dialogue yielded a form of modernism grounded in their emotional responses to nature, and their profound aesthetic connection helped shape the course of art in America.

Dove/O'Keeffe: Circles of Influence was organized by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. It is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.



Stieglitz first exhibited Dove's pastels at his gallery in New York in 1912, and Dove was soon recognized as a leading American modernist. In 1914, O'Keeffe saw a reproduction of an abstract pastel by Dove and began to seek out more of his work. She admired his bold, vibrant forms, and soon began making her own abstract drawings in charcoal and watercolor. A few years later, Stieglitz showed O'Keeffe's early abstract drawings at his gallery. Immediately attracted to the younger artist and her work, Stieglitz promoted O'Keeffe within the burgeoning modern art market and introduced her to Dove in 1918.

By the mid-1920s critics were remarking on the visual affinities between Dove's and O'Keeffe's work. Viewing the artists' paintings through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis, they cast Dove and O'Keeffe as the quintessential male and female practitioners of modernist art in America. Yet even as Dove and O'Keeffe won critical acclaim in New York, they both spent time away from the city. Dove worked as a farmer in Connecticut during the 1910s, and spent the 1920s living on a sailboat with his second wife, the artist Helen Torr. O'Keeffe spent her summers with Stieglitz at his estate on Lake George in upstate New York, and they married in 1924. Both artists forged deep connections to their natural surroundings, inspired by the colors, sights, and sounds they experienced. All the while, they stayed attuned to each other's successes through Stieglitz, who regularly exhibited their work at his New York galleries.

By the 1930s, O'Keeffe was dividing her time between New York and New Mexico, returning east only a few times a year to visit Stieglitz. Retreating to her home outside Santa Fe, O'Keeffe moved away from abstraction toward more representational painting. This new direction generated some of her most iconic work: paintings of skulls, flowers, and the southwestern landscape. Around the same time, Dove and Torr moved to Dove's hometown of Geneva, New York, and later to Long Island. Feeling the need to reinvigorate his art, Dove started working intensely in watercolor, taking inspiration from O'Keeffe's early work in the medium, and created increasingly abstract compositions.

Even as their styles began to diverge, Dove and O'Keeffe continued to appreciate each other's achievements. O'Keeffe kept several of Dove's works at her southwest home, while Dove hung one of her paintings in his sailboat's cabin. After the deaths of Stieglitz and Dove in 1946, O'Keeffe permanently settled in New Mexico. While her fame continued to rise for the rest of her long life, she never forgot the influence of Dove, whom she credited with helping her discover her artistic voice.



PAGE 1 (left to right): Detail of *Sunrise*, 1924, by Arthur Dove (Milwaukee Art Museum. Gift of Mrs. Edward R. Wehr; Courtesy of and copyright The Estate of Arthur Dove/Courtesy Terry Dintenfass, Inc.); *Georgia O'Keeffe, 1918*, by Alfred Stieglitz (The Art Institute of Chicago. Alfred Stieglitz Collection; © 2009 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York), *Arthur G. Dove, 1911*, by Alfred Stieglitz (Philadelphia Museum of Art. From the collection of Dorothy Norman, 1967; © 2009 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York) **PAGE 2** (left to right): *Sunrise*, 1916, by Georgia O'Keeffe (Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth; © 2009 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York), *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI, 1930*, by Georgia O'Keeffe (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe), *Moon, 1935*, by Arthur Dove (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth; Courtesy of and copyright The Estate of Arthur Dove/Courtesy Terry Dintenfass, Inc.)