

December 2, 2008

**DOVE/O'KEEFFE: CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE**

**Georgia O'Keeffe and Arthur Dove's Artistic Relationship and Mutual Influence  
Examined at the Clark Summer 2009**

**For immediate release  
Digital images available upon request**

WILLIAMSTOWN, MA – The life and work of Georgia O'Keeffe have fascinated critics, scholars, and art lovers alike since she burst onto the New York art scene in the early 1900s. On June 7, 2009, the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute adds a chapter to this story with the first exhibition to explore the role of the influential American modernist painter Arthur Dove as the key figure in O'Keeffe's development of abstraction as a means of artistic expression. *Dove/O'Keeffe: Circles of Influence* will feature 60 major oil paintings, watercolors, drawings, and pastels spanning 1910 to the early 1940s. Among the seminal works on view will be O'Keeffe's *Dark Abstraction* (1924) and *Jack-in-The Pulpit No. VI* (1930), and Dove's *Moon* (1935) and *Fog Horns* (1929). The Clark is the exclusive venue for this exhibition, which will be on view through September 7, 2009.

Although Dove and O'Keeffe's approach to imagery ultimately diverged, their shared interest in capturing the ephemeral, fugitive traits of nature—the play of light on water, the transitions of the sun and moon, and the rustle of the wind through grass—was the basis for an abiding commitment to each other's works and a profound aesthetic connection that lasted throughout their lifetimes.

“Georgia O'Keeffe has captured the imagination of art lovers around the world, not only by virtue of her incredible talent, but through her bohemian spirit as well,” said Clark director Michael Conforti. “The Clark is excited to look for the first time at O'Keeffe's early modernist work along with the work of the extraordinary artist Arthur Dove, examining their shared influence on each other's works.”

From the start of her career, O'Keeffe credited a reproduction of a Dove pastel as her introduction to modernism. Dove's use of sensual, abstract forms to evoke the flowing rhythms and patterns of nature had already put him at the forefront of the American modernist movement by the time O'Keeffe entered the scene around 1916. Dove had been featured at the renowned photographer Alfred Stieglitz's New York gallery “291” in 1912, and O'Keeffe's work was first shown there in 1916. Works from this period, including Dove's *Abstraction, No. 3* (1910-11) and O'Keeffe's *No. 24-Special/No. 24* (1916-17), established the innovative aesthetic vision that characterized their early work.



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 36 x 18 in. (91.4 x 45.7 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe  
Image courtesy of the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

During the 1920s and 1930s, critics began to take serious note of the two artists as major American modernist painters. In particular, the critics began to read the paintings from a Freudian point of view, pairing Dove and O’Keeffe as representative of the “masculine” and “feminine.” Unlike Dove, O’Keeffe reacted strongly against these psychoanalytic readings of her work, arguing for a more formal interpretation. Dove, always a strong and vocal supporter of O’Keeffe, ultimately used the Freudian interpretation in defense of O’Keeffe’s work.



*Moon*, 1935, by Arthur Dove.  
Oil on canvas, 35 x 25 in.  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D.C. Collection  
of Barney A. Ebsworth

O’Keeffe’s influence on Dove can be seen in the 1930s, when he turned to her early works, particularly her watercolors, such as *Sunrise* (1916), as means through which to renew his own work and vision. Although O’Keeffe had long abandoned the medium, Dove created a number of important works including *Sunrise #1* (1936) during this period, when he found his inspiration in what he called O’Keeffe’s “burning watercolors.”

The paintings from the exhibition will be drawn from international public and private collections. The exhibition features works once owned by Alfred Stieglitz, O’Keeffe’s husband and Dove’s longtime friend, as well as works from the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum. This exhibition is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

The exhibition is organized by the Clark and is curated by Debra Bricker Balken, an independent curator specializing in American modernism and contemporary art who organized a Dove retrospective in 1997. The Clark will publish an exhibition catalogue authored by Balken and distributed by Yale University Press. This will be the first publication to focus on the relationship between Dove and O’Keeffe and explores the nature of art criticism in the early twentieth century as it related to psychoanalytic thought and formalism.

### **The Clark**

Set amidst 140 acres in the Berkshires, the Clark is one of the few major art museums that also serves as a leading international center for research and scholarship. In addition to its extraordinary collections, the Clark organizes groundbreaking exhibitions that advance new scholarship and presents public and educational programs. The Clark’s research and academic programs include an international fellowship program and conferences. The Clark, together with Williams College, sponsors one of the nation’s leading master’s programs in art history.

In June 2008, the Clark opened Stone Hill Center, the first phase of its expansion and campus enhancement project. Designed by Tadao Ando, the 32,000-square-foot, wood-and-glass building houses two galleries, a meeting and studio art classroom, an outdoor café, and the Williamstown Art Conservation Center. The second phase of the expansion includes the creation of another stand-alone building by Ando that will house exhibition galleries, visitor services, and education and conference spaces. Scheduled for completion in 2013, Phase II also encompasses the upgrade and internal expansion of the Clark’s current buildings by Annabelle Selldorf.

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