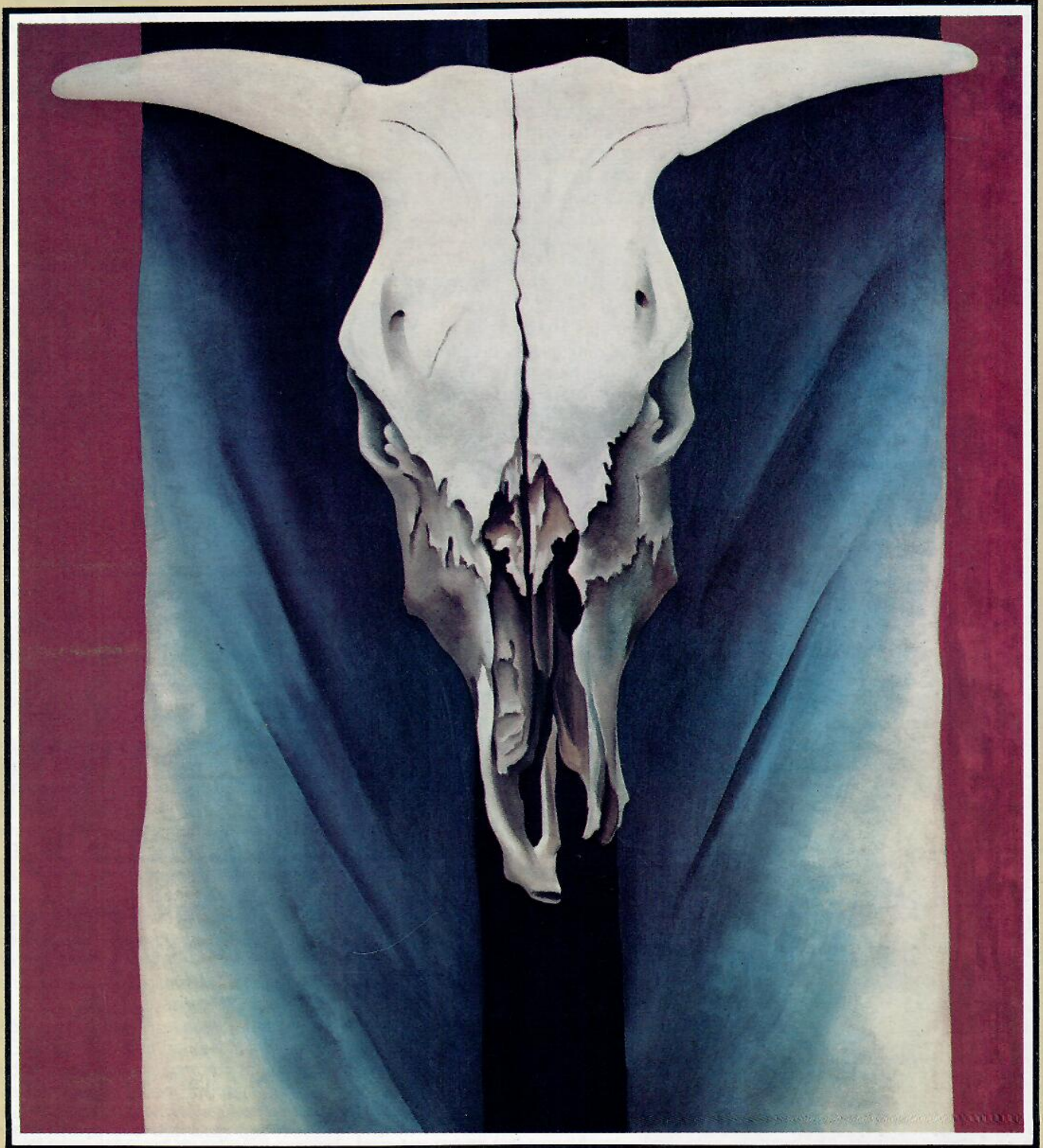


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**art &
man**

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GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

CREATING WITH SPACE

Georgia O'Keeffe's desert landscape as she sees it from her studio window.



Road past the View I, 1964. Collection of the artist. Photo by Malcolm Varon, N.Y.C.

GEORGIA O'KEEFE: HER DESERT WORLD

Georgia O'Keeffe has been painting the New Mexican desert for the last 50 years. What has she found there? How did she become one of America's greatest artists?

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“The red hill is a piece of the badlands where even the grass is gone. Badlands roll away outside my door—hill after hill—I think this is our most beautiful country.”

When the painter Georgia O’Keeffe first saw the Southwest in 1929, she was stunned. She had never seen anything like its deserts before. She loved the wind, the emptiness—all that open space. Mountains and mesas stretched out as far as she could see. The rocks and hills took fantastic shapes and forms, and the colors—red, black, yellow, purple, gold—were breathtaking. This part of New Mexico seemed to be her country, and she wanted to paint it. Soon she would, and her strong personal vision of this land would make her a pioneer in modern American art.

But that would be later. Her vacation was over and she had to go back home to New York. What could she take back, she wondered, to remind her of the desert? She decided it would be the barrel of old animal bones she had collected. Their polished white shapes seemed more alive to her than living animals. These bones would be her symbols of the desert.

Back home, she began painting them realistically in ordinary settings, but the more she painted them, the stranger her paintings became. Look at *Cow’s Skull—Red, White and Blue* on our cover. Does it have the kind of feeling you might expect a skull to have? Some people think this skull looks like an emblem on a flag. Others see a kind of cross. If you look more closely, you will see how Georgia O’Keeffe has used space in surprising ways. In some places, the images appear flat. The top half of the skull and the red and black bands have no depth at all. Other parts look three-dimensional—the bottom of the skull and the blue and white areas. And the skull itself seems to be *floating* in space.

But why did O’Keeffe do a painting like this? American painters of the early 20th century looked to Europe and its art for inspiration. O’Keeffe had no desire to make European art. In a proud rebellious way, she painted a cow’s skull that could have come only from a southwestern desert and put it on a red, white, and blue background. This would be an American painting!

Georgia O’Keeffe had always been one to do things her own way. By the time she was 10 (living in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin) she knew she wanted to be an artist. Later, in art school, she did well, but rebelled against the kind of paintings students were taught to make. It had all been done before. She decided instead to learn from herself and make work that was her own.

It wasn’t long before this new work attracted the attention of photographer Alfred

Stieglitz, who, more than anyone else in America, was promoting new ideas about art. She became a regular exhibitor in his gallery, and also the subject of his photographs. Eventually, they were married. It was a famous marriage, and it made each of them more famous.

But fame and all its rewards were not what O’Keeffe really wanted. Once she had seen the vast, empty deserts of New Mexico, she would have been happy to leave the city altogether. She went there to paint every summer, and when Stieglitz died, she made it her permanent home.

Today, at 92, she is still there, painting in her own way. She used to drive out into the badlands and paint all day long, taking a break only when the blistering sun forced her to take cover underneath her car. Now, though, she is more likely to paint inside, in the studio of her adobe home.

From one of her windows you can see this scene (*above, left*) that she has painted. Unlike the close-up of the cow’s skull, this is a landscape showing the open space of the desert. But like the cow’s skull, it too expresses strong inner feelings. Do you think this painting looks much like the actual scene? What makes it look more like a vision than reality?

In this work, *Road Past the View I*, O’Keeffe has left out the details and concentrated only on the road and a few distant hills. How do we know it is a road? Where does the painting become flat and lose a sense of three-dimensional space?

As you’ve seen, Georgia O’Keeffe’s paintings say more about her emotions than about the actual subjects. In this issue you will discover more about Georgia O’Keeffe, you’ll meet a young artist who creates her own visions of nature, and you’ll learn to see space in a new way.

COVER: Georgia O’Keeffe (b. 1887).
Cow’s Skull—Red, White, and Blue, 1931.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.
The Alfred Stieglitz Collection.



Adventures of the Artist

A NEW WAY OF SEEING

People were shocked when they saw Georgia O'Keeffe's huge paintings of flowers in 1924. Why had she painted them so big?

Jack-in-the-Pulpit III, 1930. 40 x 30 inches. Collection of the artist. Photo by Malcolm Varon, N.Y.C.



Jack-in-the-Pulpit IV, 1930. 40 x 30 inches. Collection of the artist. Photo by Malcolm Varon, N.Y.C.



“Nobody sees a flower—really—it is so small—we haven’t time. So I said to myself—I’ll paint what the flower is to me, but I’ll paint it so big they will have to look at it.”

Before Georgia O’Keeffe discovered the desert, she spent most of her summers in upstate New York, an area of woods and lakes and mountains. Whenever she could, she would get off by herself to paint. She had always loved growing things and one spring she was drawn to some flowers called jack-in-the-pulpits.

She remembered how her high school art teacher had held up a jack-in-the-pulpit and pointed out the strange shapes and all the shades of violet and green. Then she had held up the purplish hood so they could see the jack inside. This was the first time O’Keeffe had really looked at a flower and seen the details.

Now, several years later she decided to paint that flower. And she didn’t paint it just once—she painted it six times. Each time she moved closer, and in each painting the flower became more abstract. It seemed to take on a power and force like some strong emotional feeling. Here was nature—not just looked at, but felt almost as if from inside the flower itself. These are three paintings from her series. How are they different from flowers you’ve seen before in paintings? How has the space been used in each one? How does it change as she gets closer and closer to the flower? Where is the space flat? Where is it three-dimensional? Where do you find *deep* space, or space that gives a feeling of distance?

In each painting she concentrates on a single flower. The one above left still looks like a jack-in-the-pulpit, but it has taken on a feeling of fantasy. Look at the way it seems to be floating through the air. The deep space of the sky can be seen in the spaces between the leaves. (This is a favorite theme of hers—the idea of looking at the sky *through*

How did Georgia O’Keeffe start out with this painting of a flower...

something.) Notice the way she has designed the whole space, the way she has laid out the leaves in a very exact way to produce a strong composition.

The next one in the series (below left) is just the top of the flower, enormously magnified as if O'Keeffe were looking through the lens of a camera. (Photographers were also creating images like this in the twenties.) She is so close that the flower fills practically the whole space of the painting (compare it to the previous one). The flower becomes difficult to recognize. Is it a landscape? A blue flame? Is that blue sky in the corners? But it doesn't really matter. What does matter is that this painting seems to communicate some intense feeling about nature.

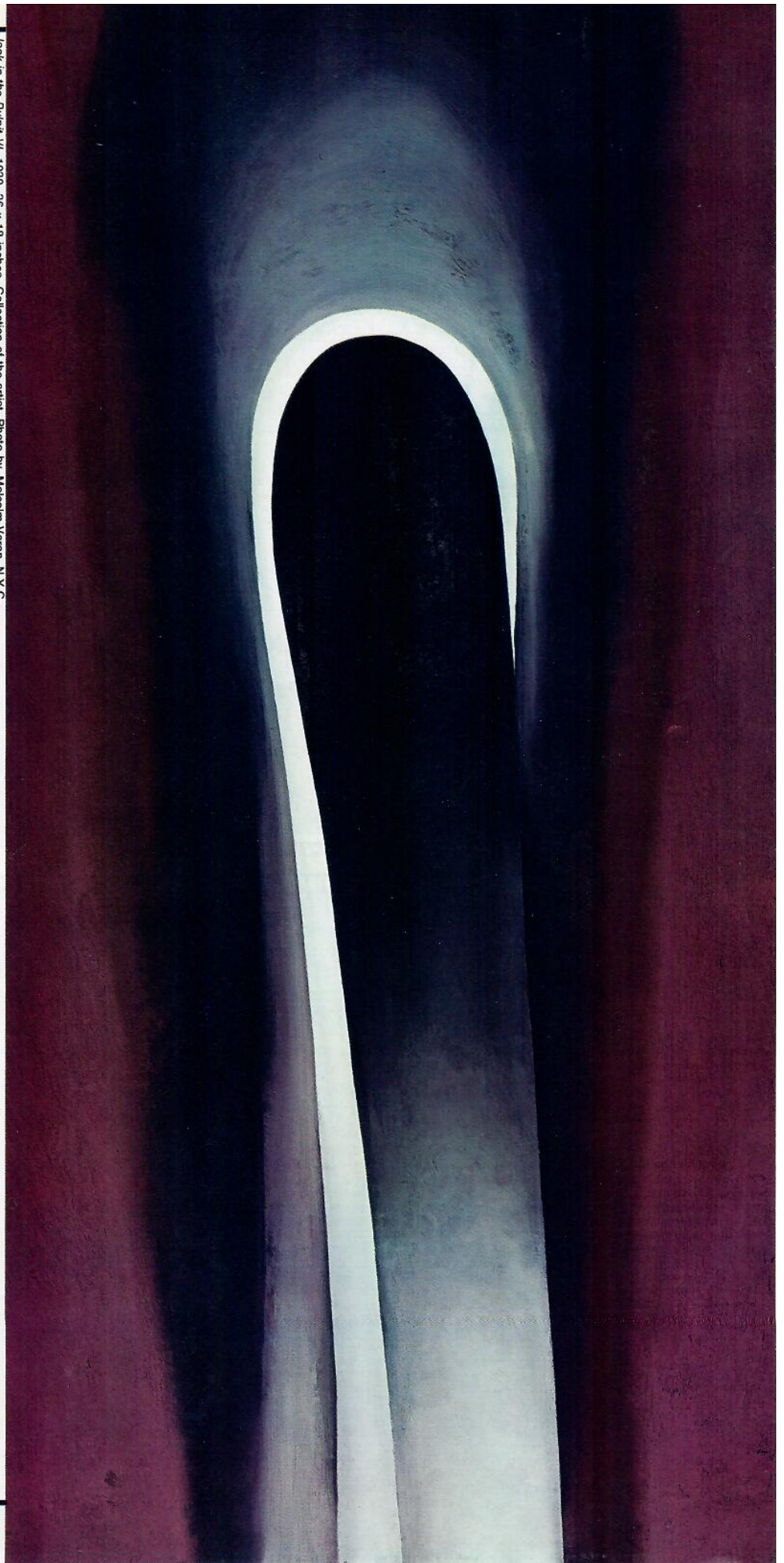
In the last painting (right), she moves in on just the jack, the center of the flower.

This painting is the most abstract of all. How would you describe it? Is the space as sharply defined as in the others? Where is it flat? Where does it have dimension? Does the jack look like some kind of vision? Does there seem to be a white light inside its form? What effect does the broad white line around the jack create? Would you have known this was a flower if you hadn't seen the first painting?

Georgia O'Keeffe is a master at creating abstractions that are more than just abstractions. They seem to move. They almost seem to be alive. She has found powerful ways to put together flowing lines, lights and darks, and different kinds of space. In the twenties when she made most of her paintings of flowers, her approach seemed quite shocking and very modern. People were used to bouquets in vases painted in delicate colors—not big, bold close-up views of a single flower. But O'Keeffe had never been one to do what had been done before. She had to make flowers express her own strong feelings—about nature, about life, about herself.

....and end up with this?

Jack-in-the-Pulpit VI, 1930. 36 x 18 inches. Collection of the artist. Photo by Malcolm Varon, N.Y.C.



CITY SPACES

Georgia O'Keeffe works in the wide open spaces of the desert, but there are other kinds of space. On these three pages are several paintings of cities. Do they look at all alike? Find out how artists can express themselves in completely different ways just through their use of space.

Oriental artists saw space in a very different way.



Wang Wei (699-759). Poet and painter of China. Copy of scroll; original in British Museum.

WANG WEI: A Timeless Space

This is a painting of a small town in China. Like the European painting, below, it contains buildings, people, a bridge, and water. But when you look at this painting, are these the things you see first? Artists of China saw the world in a very different way from artists in the West. They considered human beings as just a small part of a larger universe. The tiny buildings and people in this landscape are almost lost in the vast mists and mountains.

Chinese artists wanted to capture the timeless *essence* of nature, rather than to reproduce a certain place "realistically." They also wanted to give the feeling that the viewer is *in* the landscape, not looking at it from the *outside*. In the painting at the left, you can see how the 8th-century artist Wang Wei did this. He didn't use *perspective* (a way of creating the feeling of "real" space), but painted each item from a different point of view. The mountains, rocks, and water look as if they are being seen from high *above*. The trees and buildings are shown from the side and become smaller as they move toward the top.



Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal, 1697-1768). *View in Venice*, c. 1740. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Widener Collection.

The Impressionist painters changed the way people saw the world.



Claude Monet (1840-1926), *Palazzo de Mula, Venice*, 1908, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Chester Dale Collection.

◊ CANALETTO: The World Through a Window

A bridge, buildings, and people like those you saw in the Chinese painting, also appear in this city scene, but now they are the main focus of the painting. This is an actual canal in Venice as it might have looked as seen through a rectangular window more than 200 years ago.

Ever since the Renaissance, Western artists had tried to scientifically represent "real" space. They made up a system of *perspective* that would allow them to place objects on a flat surface in order to make them look three-dimensional. You can get an idea of how perspective works by making a dot a little to the right of and a little above the bridge. This is called the "vanishing point." Draw a line along each side of the canal and continue the lines into the distance. Where do the two lines meet? Can you find other architectural features (the squares in the sidewalk or the rows of windows in the houses) that also look like they are receding into space along imaginary "perspective" lines?

The size and shape of the area included in a painting is the *format*. The 18th-century Italian artist Canaletto painted dozens of views of the city of Venice. He chose to paint this scene from a distance, including as many details as possible in his format, in order to capture the look of a great and busy city. What about all that 'empty' sky? Cover it with your hand. What does the addition of the great expanse of sky at the top do for the *space* in the painting?

This painting could almost be a photograph.

◊ CLAUDE MONET: The World Close Up

This is a view of Venice done by the French Impressionist Claude Monet. Do you see any similarities to the other painting of Venice? Most of the differences result from the two artists' very different ways of handling *space*.

In the work on the left, Canaletto wanted to show the viewer *exactly* what it would be like to be in the middle of the city of Venice. His painting was carefully composed from sketches, and done over a long period of time in his studio. Every detail is important, and the very finished technique contributes to the effect of three-dimensional reality. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, this kind of painting was no longer necessary. A new invention, the camera could, in an instant, record people and scenes that looked more "real" than any painting. If artists were going to express themselves in paint, they would have to do it in a totally new way.

Monet and the other Impressionist painters wanted to communicate something more than just the "look" of a place. They wanted to capture their "first impression" of a scene. In this painting of Venice, Monet has chosen to show only a small part of the same scene Canaletto painted. Monet doesn't use perspective at all. The painting is made up of two flat bands; the top band is a row of buildings, the bottom is water. Instead of a panorama, Monet's painting is a frontal close-up, the same kind of composition you might see through the viewfinder of a camera.

Which side of the street in this painting is “real”?

Richard Estes (b. 1936). *Paris Street Scene*, 1972. Sydney and Frances Lewis Collection.



RICHARD ESTES: A New Reality

Some contemporary artists have returned to the very realistic painting techniques used by the old masters. Compare American artist Richard Estes's work *Paris Street Scene* with Canaletto's painting of Venice on page 6. The time and place may be different but each artist has carefully rendered and placed every tiny detail to give the feeling of an actual location. Both use the same rules of perspective to create the feeling of deep three-dimensional space. But what makes Richard Estes's approach a totally 20th-century one?

A photograph of Venice would probably have looked very much like Canaletto's painting. Richard Estes's work also looks like a photograph. In fact, he and other modern painters called "photorealists" actually work from photos. But the photorealists don't just copy photographs. They change and combine them in unusual ways to express their own vision of the American city today.

Richard Estes feels modern Americans are exposed to

so many images that we tend to see photographically. *Paris Street Scene* exaggerates photographic qualities. Unlike a vision seen by the camera or the human eye, which focuses on one specific thing and blurs everything else, this painting shows every detail in sharp focus. There is a more intense sense of reality than in a photo. What is missing in this work? It's bright daylight, but where are the people? Estes's city streets stretch for miles, but they are always empty. What feeling does this deserted sidewalk give you?

Estes uses *perspective*, but do you notice anything strange about it? What if the stores on the right were solid and not made of glass? Would you get the same feeling of depth? Estes uses *reflections* not only to increase the feeling of space, but to give a sense of uneasiness to his paintings. As you keep looking at this work, does the reflection seem to *become* the right side of the street? And can you tell if what you're seeing is a reflection, or something going on inside the windows?

NOTE


To remove your full-color reproduction, open the magazine to the center of the poster. Make a small slit with a razor blade or an X-Acto knife right beside each staple. The reproduction will then pull out with no damage to it or the rest of the magazine.



Artist of the Month

René Montague
Creating
Nature
Fantasies

René Montague, a high school senior, has given her cool, dark painting of a jungle an unusual title. It's called "Mike" and in this interview you'll find out why.

Photos by Janet Soderberg. 

René Montague, like Georgia O'Keeffe, likes to put her feelings into her paintings. She has found that her life, whether she's happy or sad, somehow shows up in her work. She feels that flowers can symbolize her moods; trees can symbolize her family. She likes the idea of putting a feeling inside a plant. René lives in a wooded area in Raleigh, North Carolina. She loves the natural world and has a large collection of plants, seashells, and bottles she has found. She began painting a couple of years ago and all of her subjects have been landscapes or close-ups of nature. One painting, "Mike," went on to win a Scholastic Art Award, and that's how we found out about her work. A few months ago we visited René at her home to talk about her painting.



This painting, "Mike," a Scholastic Art Award winner, expresses more than meets the eye.

How did you happen to do the painting “Mike”?

It started with another painting I did called “In My Younger Years.” Both are based on the paintings of Henri Rousseau (who also did dark paintings of jungles). It was an assignment and we were supposed to try to capture the feeling of a certain painter—not copy his or her style but let it influence your painting.

Why did you do this second painting on the same theme?

It was basically a study of color. I wanted to experiment with the color green even more and create as many different shades as I could. With it I wanted to use red because they’re complementary colors (opposite each other on the color wheel).

My teacher really stresses thinking about what you’re going to do—the colors and the composition—and then it will be easier to express yourself.

How did you plan out the painting?

First I did a realistic drawing. I took some house plants that were special to me—plants that I’d had a long time—and used them to create a jungle. But I changed their scale. I took a tiny violet and made it much bigger. I turned another plant into a running vine. Then I drew plants from my imagination to fill in. I made up the swooping grass and the tree, and the hanging vine. I love the way vines hang down from trees—the way they curl and kink.

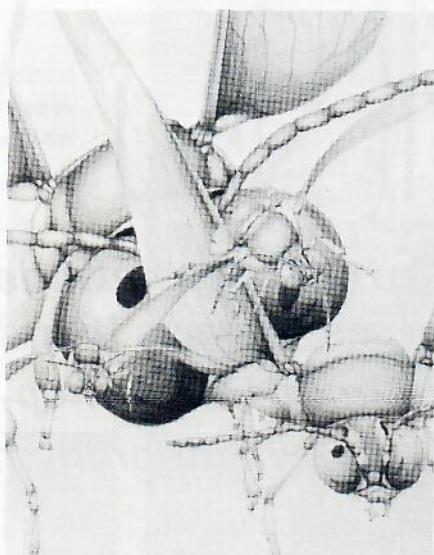
What were you trying to express in your landscape?

I love plants. They grow, they change—they’re just beautiful. I don’t think they have feelings, but I like taking feelings that I have and putting them into plants and objects. My feelings about family—and stability—seem to come out in the trees. But those things could be removed very suddenly; they could just be taken away. I showed that in the tree stump.

Did you plan this out beforehand?

No, I thought about it while I was painting. When I’m working, I’m always thinking—my mind just runs about everything. It’s very relaxing for me to do art because it takes me away.

When I’m finished, I like looking at my painting and trying to figure out why I did it that way. It’s just like why



In this drawing, done from life, René has used space in an unusual way. She has reversed the scale of the wasps, putting the small ones in front and the large ones in back.

you dream something. It’s very interesting.

Did you plan out the colors before you started?

No, I just decided whether I wanted a section light or dark, not the specific color. I like to be sort of spontaneous. That way it’s going to express more of what I feel.

Why did you make the sky green?

I don’t want to be realistic to the point of being boring. When you change things slightly, make things a little abstract or a different color, the painting is more interesting. The green sky and the green tree trunk—they unify the painting and make it all work.

How would you describe the composition of “Mike”?

I wanted depth in the painting. So I put a large object—the trees—in the back and a small one—the red plant—in front to create a sense of space between them. The red plant is detailed but the tree is a basic flat shape with very little detail because you can’t see detail from a distance.

I also wanted a space that was uncluttered like the sky and a space that was busy. It’s very busy through the grass. All the diagonal lines create a kind of energy and movement. I was also thinking about repeating shapes and contrast between light and dark. They pull you into a painting.

How long did it take to paint “Mike”?

About nine weeks, working several hours at school and at home on some days. I paint best at home. I don’t enjoy working around other people.

How did you know you were finished?

I’d sit back and look at it. If something wasn’t just right, it would bother me. If an important part didn’t stand out, didn’t take up the space, I’d lighten or darken it, or make it bigger or smaller to complete the composition and keep your eye moving.

Then I’d shut my eyes, then look at it, and if my eye would travel back and forth, if it was very pleasant to me, then I knew I was finished.

Why did you title the painting “Mike”?

Mike is my boyfriend and we started dating a few months before I did the painting. Mike represents the flowers. He brought a peaceful, happy time to my life, and it shows in the colors.

Do you see any similarities between your work and that of Georgia O’Keeffe?

Not at first, but then I realized she enjoys simple, natural things like I do. She also enlarges an object and lets it float. This idea of a floating design was one of the first things I ever worked with and it’s still showing up in my work (see her drawing of wasps at the top of the page).

Are you planning to go on in art?

Yes, I want to go to a four-year art school—strictly art where I won’t have to take P.E. and all that. Then I’d like to get a master’s degree. I want to get in as much education as possible, to know as much as I can about art.

I want to be a professional artist. Even if it takes my whole life to get some kind of recognition, that’s what I plan to do. To make money I’d like to teach college art. I think that would be very beneficial because it would keep me up on changing styles in art.

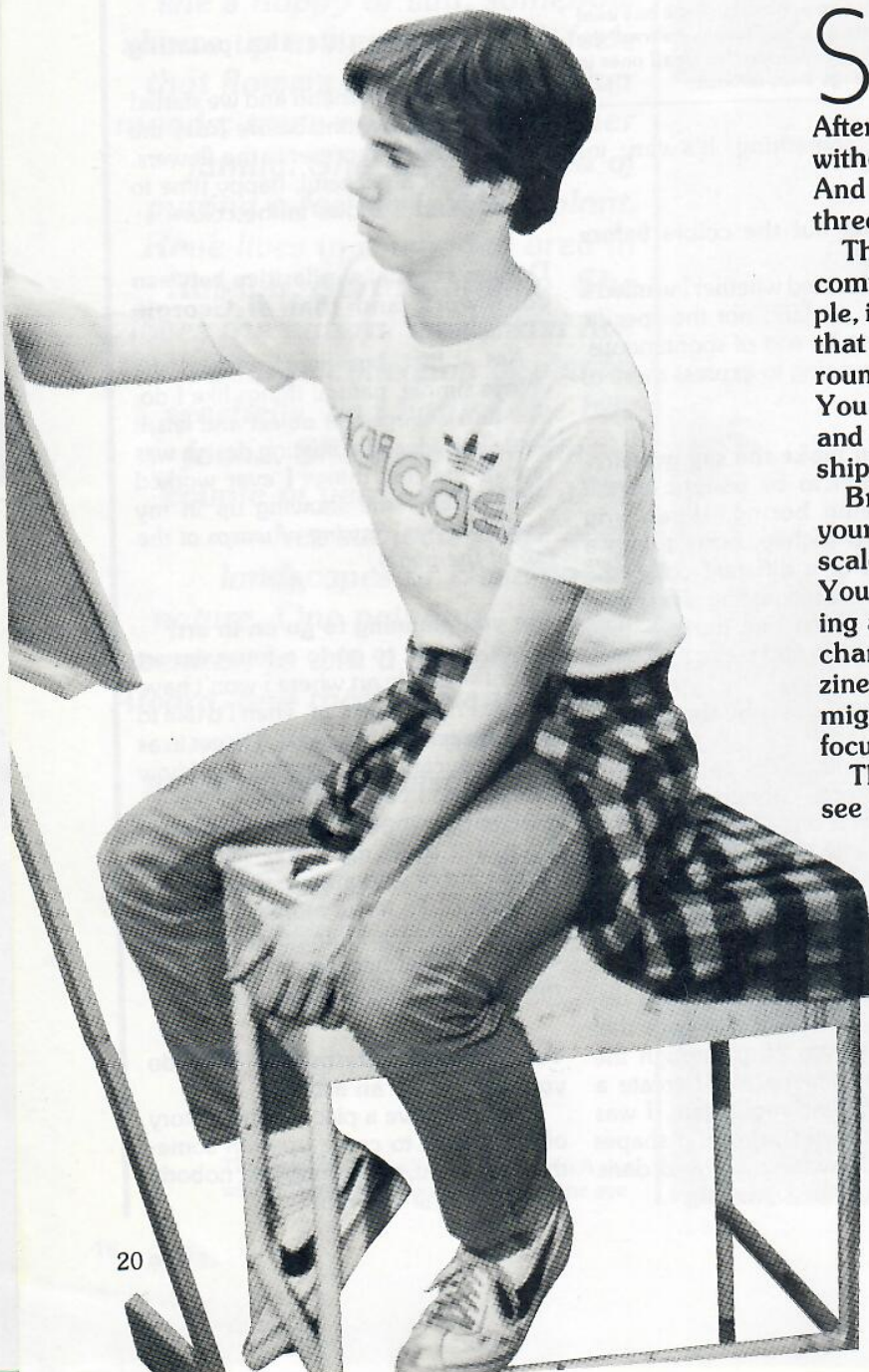
You are very determined. Why do you want to be an artist?

I want to have a place in the history of art. I want to come up with something different, something that nobody else has come up with.

CREATING WITH SPACE

In her paintings, Georgia O'Keeffe sees objects in a different way.

In this workshop, you will take a new look at an ordinary still life.



So far this year, you have worked with line, shapes, and sculptural form. Underlying all these ideas is the concept of *space*. After all, you can't put down a line or a shape without changing the space of the flat surface. And sculpture, of course, exists within a real three-dimensional space.

The "normal" way of looking at things is from a comfortable distance. This magazine, for example, is probably far enough away from your eyes so that you can see the entire magazine and its surroundings, but you are still able to read the print. You have a good sense of the size of the magazine and the space that it occupies. This size relationship is called "scale."

Bring the magazine up to your face so that it fills your field of vision. You have now changed the scale of the magazine so that it seems very large. You have also changed the *ordinary* way of looking at the object to an *extraordinary* one, just by changing your spatial relationship to the magazine. If you made a painting of this close-up view, it might look very "abstract" with its huge, soft-focus letters.

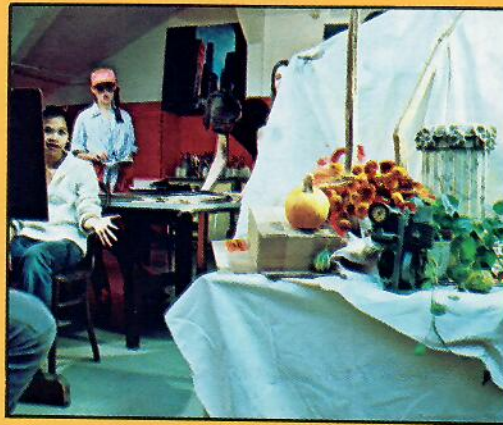
This change of perception (the way in which we see the object), created by changing the spatial distance between the viewer and the object, is a key element in Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings. O'Keeffe, by bringing her subjects "close up" to the viewer, is able to give her subject a special meaning. This allows us to see it in a new and exciting way. We see the subject from a different point of view and we see the "essence" of the form, without competition from other visual elements.

Photographs by Richard Hutchings.

Special thanks to the Packer Collegiate Institute, Brooklyn, NY.

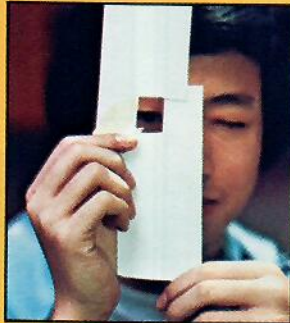
STARTING OUT

The only materials you will need for this project are: colored pastels, colored paper or construction paper.



1 Put together a still life arrangement.

2 Make a "viewfinder" with cardboard or paper. By using two pieces, as shown, you can change the size and shape of your viewfinder.



3 Now determine your "picture plane" (the area included in your picture) by changing the distance of your eyes to your viewfinder.

4 By changing the spatial distance, you can change what is included in the picture plane. Using deep space, we see most of the objects and our eye does not go off the picture plane. As we make our space shallower, we imply the existence of the objects beyond the picture plane. In O'Keeffe's paintings, the object may be 10 times the size of the part she has painted.



5 Get an idea first, then sketch it loosely.



6 Work "base" colors into the drawing that correspond to the colors of the objects. Lighten or darken the "value" of the colors according to the highlights and shadows. (When you lighten a color you change its tint, and when you darken it you change its "shade.")

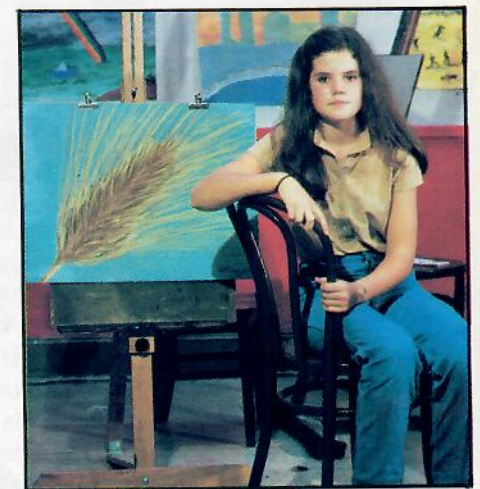
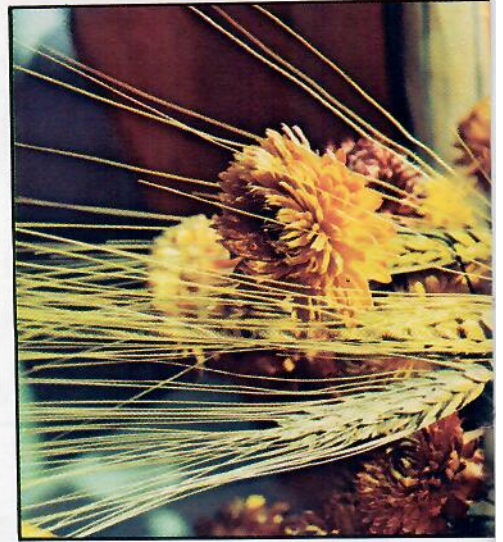


7 Work in details and shading last.



SOME IDEAS

After completing one pastel, try to alter your spatial distance so that you change the identity of the same object. Remember, you are composing the entire page.



Here are close-up photos of two objects in the still life set-up. Compare them with the two pastel works (right). You can see how the colors and shapes have been changed, the forms are all open

You might set up a still life like this one. Use objects with very different shapes, colors, sizes and textures.

This artist has shown the still life from fairly far away. Which are *closed* and which are *open* forms?

This drawing shows *medium* space.

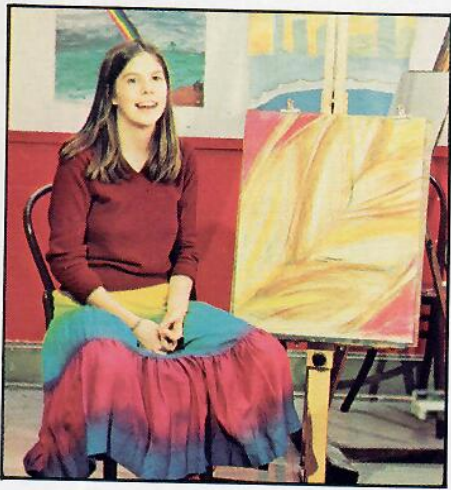




This is a photographic detail of the same still life. Both of these artists have chosen this detail. Which of these works is still recognizable? Which artist has used *medium* and which *shallow* space?



Like Georgia O'Keeffe, this artist has chosen to represent her own feelings about the object, rather than the way it looks. The detail in the photo (left) has been simplified and flattened into an "abstraction" (below).



and the works have been made into personal expressions. Has the "essence" of these objects been captured simply by narrowing the space between the viewer and the picture plane?



ARTS ALIVE

Georgia O'Keeffe on TV

In this issue you've been reading all about the American painter Georgia O'Keeffe and her work. You can also see and hear the artist herself in an hour-long television presentation filmed at her studio in New Mexico. This film is part of a series called *The Originals: Women in Art* and was presented for the first time last year on the Public Broadcasting System. It is rebroadcast from time to time, so watch your local program guide for the next showing.



Georgia O'Keeffe with *Pelvis Series* (see pages 13-16).

A 2.5-Million-Dollar Discovery

Have you ever looked carefully at all the paintings hanging in your school? Do you think one could be a lost masterpiece, just waiting to be rediscovered?

That's just what happened when the administrators at Rose Hill, a school in England, decided to sell one of their old paintings. They needed funds for repairs and thought they might get a little for the dirty, old, unframed seascape that had hung for years beside a staff stairway. When they sent a photograph to a London art dealer, they were shocked to hear the work was by the famous 19th-century



Frederic Church (1826-1900). *Icebergs*, 1861. New York Times photo by John Sotomayor.

El Greco (1541-1614). *The Annunciation*, 1565-76. Collection Thyssen-Bornemisza, Lugano, Switzerland.



The Thyssen Treasures

Both of these paintings were done by the great Spanish artist El Greco. They are of the same subject, but the one on the right was painted 25 or 30 years after the one on the left. The first one looks very traditional, but the second one could have been created by no one but El Greco. No one else painted such strange, elongated figures, in acid colors, with flashing highlights.

You can compare both of these works and see how El Greco developed his unique style. You can also see part of one of the "greatest private collections of old masters in the world" without going to Europe. *Paintings from the Collection of Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza* is an ex-



El Greco. *The Annunciation*, 1596-1600. Collection Thyssen-Bornemisza.

hibition made up of 57 of the best-known paintings from the hundreds of treasures owned by the wealthy Thyssen family in Switzerland.

The show will be at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, until Feb. 17. It will then travel to the Detroit Institute of Arts from March 8-May 11; the Minneapolis Institute of Arts from May 29-August 3; the Cleveland Museum of Art from Sept. 2-Oct 26; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art from Nov. 15-Jan 18, 1981; the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, from April 25-June 28, 1981; the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, July 18-Sept. 20, 1981, and end at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, from Oct 9-Dec. 6, 1981.

American landscape painter, Frederic Church. *Icebergs* was Church's masterpiece. It had been sold over a century ago and hadn't been seen since. It had been hanging in Rose Hill since 1863 and the building had changed hands

several times. Everyone who bought the mansion, bought the painting too, without knowing who had done it or how much it was worth.

Last October, the administrators of Rose Hill discovered they would be able to build a whole new school if they wished. In less than four minutes, *Icebergs* was sold for \$2,500,000, the highest price ever paid at public sale for an American painting.