

Unfolding the Art of Georgia O'Keeffe by Deborah Jenner

O'Keeffe's special vision bends, buckles and lobs flowers, landscapes and space itself into similar smoothly-painted folds of swirling hues in order to unearth a deeper truth.

Abstract

Through the metaphor of folding, O'Keeffe's art reveals an original interpretation of form and colour. Parallels with *origami* shed light on her approach to composition that never loses sight of the intrinsic wholeness of the surface. Her palette is seen as a prismatic refraction releasing brilliant hues from the underlying white light. By redefining her art's erotic, biomorphic folds within a spiritual context, this paper reveals a uniquely all-embracing vision of her work. Her frequent shifts between abstraction and realism function not unlike the graceful reversal of a Mobius strip. Seen through the significance of folds, critiques of O'Keeffe's art from *Camera Work* to present times take on a new twist.

Key words: 20th century American art, Gallery 291, abstract art, *origami*, spirituality, Transcendentalism

Text

O'Keeffe's Texan landscape series of 1917, *Light Coming on the Plains* (Fig. 1), traces the breaking of dawn or unfolding of light in its simplest form: Pure white sunrays start arching above the sky-blue horizon only to dissipate and reappear as glowing aura. The morning light is coming (as the title aptly points out) and going over an extended present. When all three paintings are hung together, their interactive radiant glow releases pulsating halos. The sensation is dazzling.

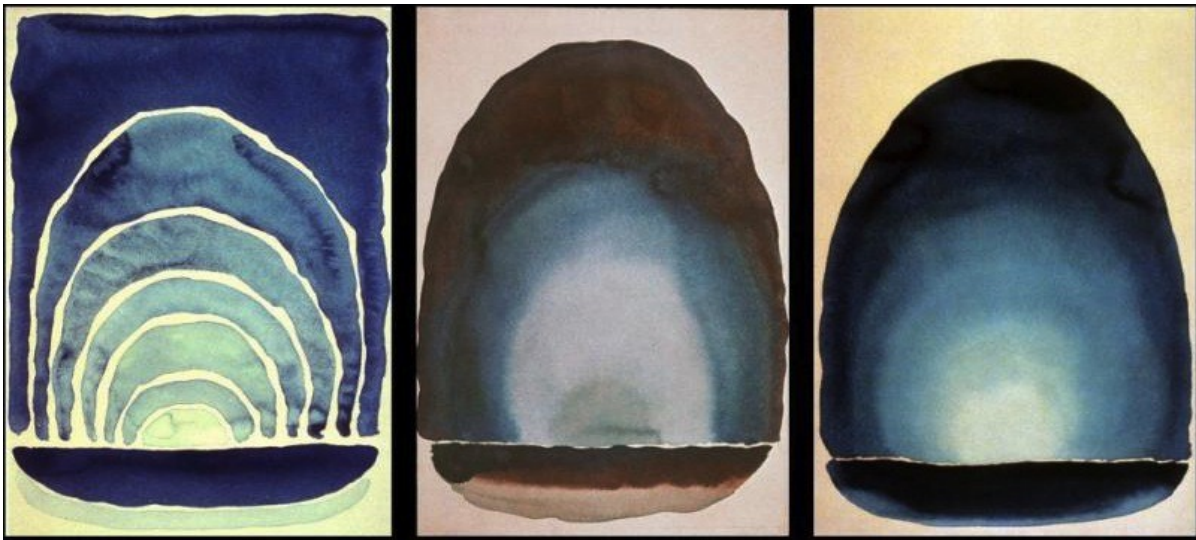


Fig. 1. Georgia O'Keeffe. *Light Coming on the Plains, I, II and III*, 1917, watercolor on paper (each 30.2 x 22.54), Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

Her smoothly painted fields of swirling hues suggest a cosmic soup with the eternal potential of metamorphose. Her luminous patterns hold in suspension the fertile phase before light waves collapse into textured particles. Her brushwork has no need for Impressionist flicks that freeze fleeting instants. Instead of depicting momentarily reflecting surfaces, her sleek, luminous vistas unveil how energy shapes light itself. Even the shadows are not cast from an exterior light source. The art of O’Keeffe expresses the idea that creation is seen as a refraction of whiteness or visual emptiness. In this optic, forms are not drawn upon a blank background. The whole pictorial surface is sub-divided by bending light into colours to reveal its potential differentiation.

Although O’Keeffe feared that the strange, abstract patterns of her early works, or ‘*Specials*’, would seem incomprehensible and even foolish,¹ she asked her friend, Anita, to take a cardboard tube of them to Gallery ‘291’ in 1916. The moment Alfred Stieglitz unrolled her drawings he experienced the same sensation of awe as one does with Chinese landscape scrolls. The act of spreading them out is all part of their allure. The viewer is led to participate and explore new vistas by following the imaginary journey through their continually shifting perspective of voids and forms. Such parallels with O’Keeffe’s work are hardly farfetched since she had studied Sung Dynasty ink painting under Arthur Dow at Columbia University and her own work was clearly unlike that of any other Western artist.

Stieglitz recognized the worth of O’Keeffe’s art at once and insisted on exhibiting it. He foresaw that her drawings “would bring a greater awareness to all who saw them”.² He hung *Blue Lines* (1916) right over his desk at Gallery 291. This quiet little painting, minimal in every respect, simply juxtaposes a straight line and a bent one, both seemingly growing out of a pool of inky blue. Yet, it presents a binary option, *I-Ching*-like, that enables all further variations of expression to unfold. And, in O’Keeffe’s case, they soon do. Her works of the late 1910s *Music: Blue and Green*, *Music: Pink and Blue* (Fig. 2), and *Evening Star* correspondingly fan out, twist, and coil light in order to channel prismatic colour into liquidly, abstract linear forms.

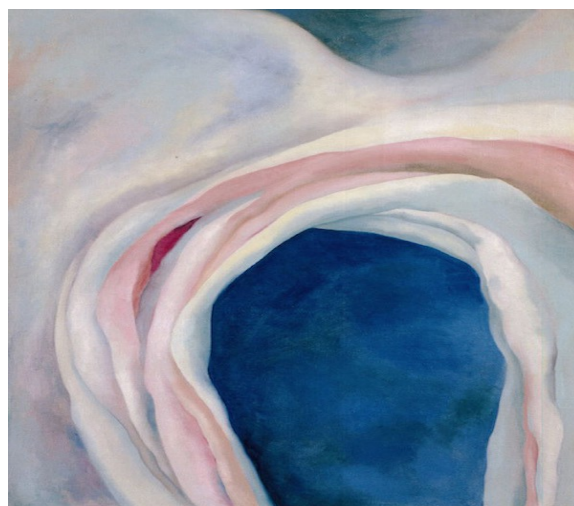


Fig. 2. Georgia O’Keeffe. *Music – Pink and Blue, N°1*, 1918, oil on canvas (88,9 x 73.7)
Collection of Barney A Ebsworth, St. Louis, Missouri,
partial and promised gift to Seattle Art Museum

However, any reference to factorization in O’Keeffe’s art must not be considered as some variation of cubism, which fragments by multiplying the external viewpoints. Quite the opposite, O’Keeffe’s whole pictorial plane is factored, not fractured. Hers demonstrates the method of “dividing space in a beautiful way” developed by her art instructor at Columbia Teacher’s College, Arthur Dow. Furthermore, in contrast to the illusionist devices, which cubism still relied on, her depiction of depth through painted folds is always subordinated to the conscious presence of the unbroken surface. O’Keeffe’s picture plane can, thus, display the implied volumes without disguising the fictive nature of their individual materiality. In evoking forms through folds, her works emphasize a sort of creative play, toying with shapes as they unfold. All the while, it underlines the impermanence of all that appears to have been made and the fallacy of believing that any truly independent structure could be made. Her paintings suggest that she has bent space itself to enclose the volumes portrayed and upon closer scrutiny, they would simply sink back into the canvas’ undifferentiated surface.

This recalls the approach of paper-folding – *Origami* - whose immaculate sheets of white paper offer an ideal symbol of the primordial space and at the same time, when artfully creased, allow temporary forms to appear. Another aspect of Japanese art, that O’Keeffe adopted is *Notan*. It replaces chiaroscuro to balance areas of light and dark without designating a particular light source or rupturing the flat pictorial surface. In painting, *Notan*, thus, complements the illusion of folds. Dow had illustrated *Notan* in his manual, *Composition*, with the bold, graphic, floral patterns and elaborate draping of kimonos that respect the fabric’s intrinsic flatness. Is it a coincidence that in later life O’Keeffe wore only kimonos? She quite naturally introduced elegant pleats, creases and tucks in various objects of everyday life. She was an avid seamstress and even made her own undergarments. As a child, she had designed a portable dollhouse that that exploited the concept of unfolding volumes. In fact, Duchamp’s *Valise* (1935-1941)– that contains a display of his works folded up in a briefcase – was inspired by her dollhouse and that of her friend, Carrie Stettheimer, for whom he painted miniature copies of his works.³

O’Keeffe did not always wish to create an object of art or even a handicraft but simply render aesthetic whatever she came into contact with. This explains her Zen-like refinement and presence in every action even that of folding a dinner napkin. Her graceful gestures echo those of a Tea Ceremony Master. It is not surprising that Okakura Kakozo’s *Book of Tea* was a most treasured source of inspiration for her.⁴ Stieglitz noticed the way she fondled things and often photographed her elegant long fingers. Graceful hands may also become a *mudrā*, a Sanskrit term for a symbolic gestures in Buddhist images. O’Keeffe prominently displayed one such sculpture in her bedroom at Abiquiu - a Thai carving of a hand in the *mudrā* ‘Fear not’ - which she had received as a gift from art curator Henry Clifford.⁵

Indeed, there is nothing to fear as long as the ultimate emptiness of form itself and the impermanence of all creation are understood. O’Keeffe’s images are designed precisely to demonstrate this quintessential truth.⁶ Through the contemplation of their beauty, they become a meditative act that epitomizes the ultimate vacuity of any subject matter portrayed. Her still lifes such as *Calla Lily on Grey* (1928; Fig. 3) tease the viewer by relaxing here and there their portrayed ‘solid’ objects into a fluid state of pure colour where tucks, pleats and curls express the underlying cataclysmic nature of all natural phenomenon.

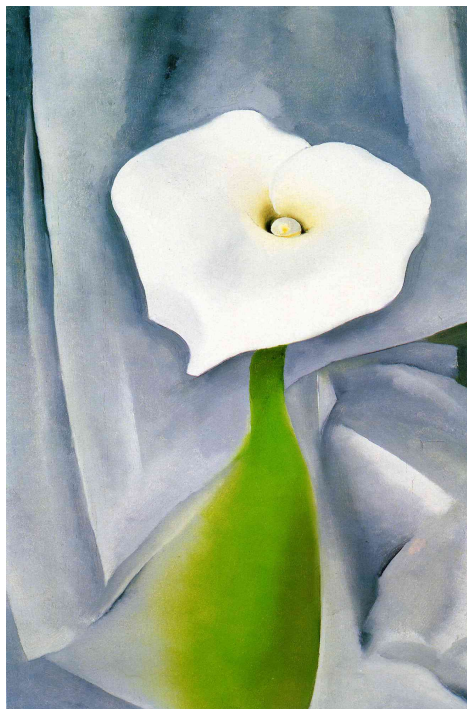


Fig. 3. Georgia O'Keeffe. *Calla Lily on Grey*, 1928, oil on canvas (80.96 x 43.18)
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of the William H. Lane Foundation

What may be called substance never loses its malleable quality. In the same way, her New Mexican landscapes such as *Black Mesa Landscape, New Mexico*, *Out back of Marie's II* (1930) depict mountainous folds buckling and smoothing out again and again over geological time.

Even her individual 'portraits' of plants and animals - clamshells, calla lilies, and snakes - are foremost defined by their organic hinges, folds and coiling as simply an on-going process rather than a separate entity.

In fact, a so-called individual form 'unfolds' when an expanse of space temporarily folds itself up. Just as the Mobius strip appears to turn inside out, yet has but one surface, the ultimate non-differentiated reality is able to model itself into an apparent existence. That is why authentic origami intentionally keeps the original sheet of paper intact. Both cutting and pasting are taboo.⁷ O'Keeffe's compositions have this same fundamental unity. This is what gives them such a different feeling from collage or *trompe l'œil*. They evoke the innate, primordial creative force that perpetually defines mountain valleys, ocean waves, river networks, leaves, flower buds and even shellfish by simply folding and unfolding itself.

When the viewer opens his eyes onto such wonder, he naturally repeats the same folding gesture with his own eyelids. It is as if the world has come into existence anew with his conscious regard. This recalls the celebrated phrase of O'Keeffe, "I think all the world has turned into what I'm seeing".⁸ It also alludes to her mystical motivation for painting: In graphically putting to paper her own vision, she alters ours. She makes our material world appear to dematerialize into her own harmonious compositions of coloured light.

Given that colour is simply white light bent through a prism, tinted folds naturally appear as the underlying subject of O'Keeffe's more abstract art. *Grey Line with Lavender and Yellow* (1925), for example, depicts a few large, flat shapes, each of a different hue, overlapping or curling back to form a delicate, luminous composition. *Blind I, Dark* (1921), on the other hand, gives a haunting view of curves as obstructions. Hues and bends can compete with each other thereby emphasizing their interdependence. *Abstraction* (1926) fades the colours to emphasize the folds. Through this seemingly banal subject, O'Keeffe resolves the painterly question of adapting surfaces to reveal volumes with her origami-like facets instead of foreshortening.

While with *Inside Red Canna* (1919), she had taken the opposite approach by collapsing her voluminous figurative subject so that it could fit onto the two-dimensional canvas plane. In fact, *Canna's* multi-layered, organic petals are reduced to completely flat, knife-edged pleats. The motif becomes a spectacular fan-shaped blossom that recalls the *Sri Yantra*. Other more realistic flower paintings by O'Keeffe portray naturally folded forms - from sprouting stems to curling petals - with refined sweeps of parabolic curves. In *Skunk Cabbage* (1928), she brings the viewer right up into the folds of her enveloping subject by placing the vanishing point outside the canvas. *Flowers Abstraction* (1924) makes an elaborate study of intertwining petals edged in orange whereas *Abstraction, White* (1927) focuses on a close-up of two, colourless folds. *Abstraction, White Rose* of the same year expresses the flower's heart as a bursting array of whorls.

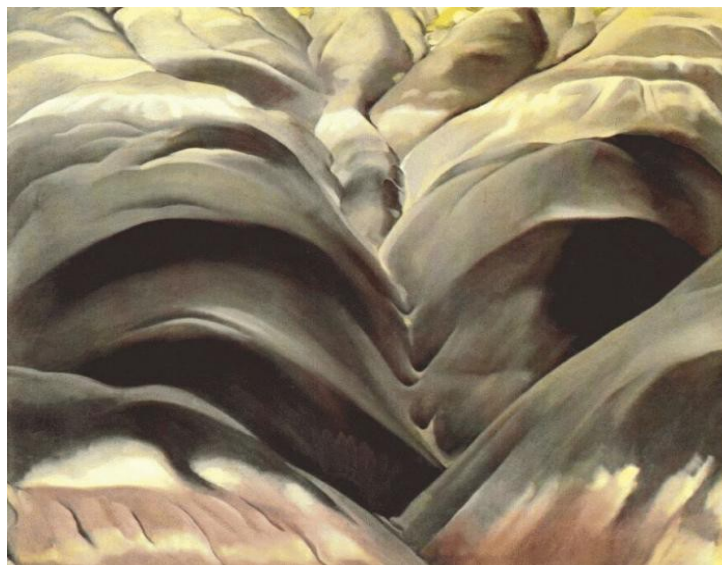


Fig. 4. Georgia O'Keeffe. *Black Place - I*, 1944, oil on canvas (66 x 76,5)
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Charlotte Mack

Not only close-up flowers but also far-away landscapes appear to be folding and unfolding. O'Keeffe's seascape, *Night Wave* (1928) gives the movement of an entire ocean with one solitary wave lapping against the shore. She seems to alternate between intricate and streamlined compositions in order to recall the reversibility of folds and of form itself. In *Black Place - I* (1944; Fig. 4), O'Keeffe suggests the textures of valleys as 'crumpled' and of mountains as 'buckled' by varying the angle and frequency at which folds appear.

One of the most curious subjects is from a later series, *Untitled (Sacsayhuaman)* (1956). It looks like a flattened sheet of paper showing traces of previous creases. Folds everywhere even unfolded and smoothed out become a memory of past forms just as facial wrinkles and palm reading trace an individual's unique history. In old age, O'Keeffe bore proudly her own wrinkled visage that had been weathered by New Mexico's desert sun.

After the death of Stieglitz, Georgia travelled all around the world. Her 1950s landscapes were sketched from an airplane window as if she was reflecting back upon her memories of life on Earth, isolating the essential. Their flattened, birds-eye views, tracing only a few bends and turns, clearly suggest rivers or roads. Brian Dijkstra in *Georgia O'Keeffe and the Eros of Place*, found that: "O'Keeffe's paintings illuminate and celebrate the eerie beauty of the silences that fold themselves into nature's ability to overcome the closely guarded distances between our selfhood and what is Other".⁹

In viewing O'Keeffe's far-away and close-up perspectives, which she often wittingly juxtaposed in the same painting, we start to feel grand - not in the sense of dominating our environment but in the sense of surpassing our own limited self. Just as with the Mobius strip, the outer and inner appear to be interchangeable. Her vision makes us open up. For Eldredge, her paintings provoke "a universal sensation of joyful release into another world".¹⁰

The metaphor of folds can be taken even further when interpreted, as 'mind-bending'. This applies to the particular way that O'Keeffe paints which obliges the viewer to consciously participate in the process of regarding a painting. We become aware of that fact that what we think we see is, in reality, something else. This, in turn, encourages us to regard our own mind in a new way. Fisher recognized such an effect at O'Keeffe's very first solo show as his critique in *Camera Work* of 1917 explains:

And it is in so communing that the consciousness comes that one's self is other than oneself, is something larger, something almost tangibly universal, since it is en rapport with a wholeness in which one's separateness is, for the time, lost. Some such consciousness, it seems to me, is active in the mystic and musical drawings of Georgia O'Keeffe ... strongly appealing to that apparently unanalyzable sensitivity in us through which we feel the grandeur and sublimity of life.¹¹

In regarding O'Keeffe's art as spiritual, it becomes clear that she accentuates her motifs of folds to express the most profound realities. There is a sort of vibrating energy between the light and dark zones provoked not by shadows but by the event of a natural landscape continuously unfolding. This energy can also be seen through O'Keeffe's flower paintings. *Black and Purple Petunias* (1925) seem to be 'peeling' apart their individual petals in order to blossom right before our eyes. One viewer at O'Keeffe's exhibition of 1925 understood their profound meaning as:

The essential truth ... the drama of life working itself out there among the petals ... it is the universe we are looking at, it isn't it? Whatever the object may be that catches our eye if we look into things rather than at them ... You take a seed ... and unroll the Cosmos out of it.¹²

The folds in O'Keeffe's abstract flowers loop back upon themselves. In this way, they reconnect the interior of a simple bud with the entire universe. They trace the ultimate fold, which turns

infinite space itself perpetually inside out. Her more concretized forms, on the contrary, must sustain the repercussions of folding and unfolding space. The art of O’Keeffe, whether abstract or realist, is unique in that it has found the delicate balance between manifestation and nothingness. She, thus, demonstrates how the mystical becomes visible on Earth. In order to achieve this, she based her view of nature, and of all reality, on the syncopated swings between forms and intervals of space as if she sought to demonstrate the Buddhist mantra from the *Heart Sutra*: “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form”.

In this optic, O’Keeffe’s work admirably fits Ansel Adams’ definition of art as “... the turning out to the light the inner folds of the awareness of the spirit”.¹³ Her paintings of radiant flowers, hills and abstract forms in folds engender a vision of the Beyond made visible. Adams declared, in reference to her own particular art, that “Nobody can look at a painting without being deeply affected. So the mystique begins and endures”.¹⁴ He is far from being the only one who understood the spiritual nature of her art. Sara Whitaker Peters, *The Early Years – Becoming O’Keeffe*, went even further: “I now think that O’Keeffe was a visionary Symbolist artist whose central concern was to cure people’s minds and bodies with her paintings. And this is why she would not (or could not) divulge what she did”.¹⁵ Furthermore, Barbara Rose has claimed for many years that O’Keeffe is a maverick mystic and a Later-day Emersonian.¹⁶

O’Keeffe’s connection with Transcendentalism can be better understood in recalling that when Emerson insisted on ‘the bended horizon’ (*Journal V*, 46),¹⁷ he had recognized the deep spiritual connotations with regards to the angle of one’s viewpoint. He, thus, proposed that everyone envision himself as ‘a transparent eyeball’¹⁸ in order to “discover that Within and Above are synonymous” (*Journal III* 399).¹⁹ He took his inspiration for the ‘Oversoul’ from the absolute, all-enfolding Consciousness described in the *Upanishads* as the ‘Divine Ground’ from which all things emanate and to which all living things may hope to return. Another Transcendentalist, Walt Whitman, in *Autumn Rivulets*, personifies this ‘Divine Ground’ in the form of a woman whose folds are the matrix of all creation: “Unfolded out of the folds of the woman man comes unfolded, and is always to come unfolded”.²⁰ The sensuous forms, in O’Keeffe’s paintings, enveloping hidden cavities - too easily explained as representing a woman’s desire to have a child - actually recall this poem from *Leaves of Grass*.

The idea of folds in association with O’Keeffe’s art has cropped up again and again in both her colleagues’ and art historians’ commentary. In 1922, Rosenfeld re-evaluated such a metaphor for the folds in her images: “Shapes as tender and sensitive as trembling lips, seem slowly, ecstatically to unfold before the eye. It is as though one had been given to see the mysterious parting movement of petals under the rays of sudden fierce heat or the scarcely perceptible twist of a leaf in a breath of air”.²¹

Through folds, O’Keeffe managed to symbolize all creation in a single rose. This brings out the underlying wave-like patterns that characterize each motif which, in turn, echo the undulations that transmit all light, sound and rays of energy along the electromagnetic spectra. This is why O’Keeffe’s paintings often seem musical or charged with electricity like with *Ballet Skirt or Electric Light* (1927). Moreover, for Rosenfeld, O’Keeffe’s knife-edged creases and fluid undulations in *Blue and Green Music* (1919) go much deeper, reaching that ...

Dim region where human and animal and plant are One, indistinguishable, and where the state of existence is blind pressure and dumb unfolding. There are spots in this work wherein the artist seems to bring before one the outline of a whole universe, an entire course of life, mysterious cycles of birth and reproduction and death, expressed through the terms of a woman's body.²²

Unfortunately, the folds in the works of O'Keeffe were quickly dismissed by other art historians as simply symbols of feminine genitals. Her flowers became identified as the folds or undulations of a vulva. Even Judy Chicago's porcelain plates from *The Dinner Party* (1970s) portray O'Keeffe as such.²³ There is no point in denying that many of her paintings of oysters or clams do emphasize puckering clefts of symmetric shells with mysterious interiors of dark, opaque emptiness. Yet, they evoke more than an equivalent of female sexuality. Such shapes call forth not only early forms of life on this earth, but also early forms of the earth itself. Her uterine landscapes and abstracts insist on the materiality of Mother Earth. Folds being naturally organic render all subjects biomorphic and fertile, bursting out into ever-new forms - a style quite distinct from the cerebral, geometric abstraction favoured by most European artists. They represent something quite abstract and powerful in their inert energy, which is at the same time full of potential evolution. Their imminent unfolding is inevitable.

However, at the same time, O'Keeffe's pictures seem to demonstrate that that all forms and colours are just a mirage. They recall the importance Carl Jung gave to never losing sight of the form's underlying clear light, which is the ultimate reality. In her treasured book on alchemy, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung tells the follower to not forget that although "every separate thought takes shape and becomes visible colour and form, the total spiritual power unfolds its trace and transforms itself into emptiness".²⁴ This corresponds to an Eastern mystical component. O'Keeffe achieved such glowing, back-lit luminosity by delimiting coloured shapes and simply leaving areas of bare, white paper or sized canvas around them to better outline their natural boundaries. She composes, thus, like for music with intervals of silence or space. That being said, her borders are rarely softened; all is in sharp focus. Yet the forms never stick out. The white spaces serve to show that forms are not solid but just diaphanous images like those of a film projected on a screen. Colours are after all simply bent light that, thanks to a prismatic effect, becomes spectral.

Just as Origami translates this phenomenon of folds into sculpture, O'Keeffe's painting does so with pigment. As Jack Cowart so aptly put it, "O'Keeffe wrapped colour around the ethereal".²⁵ When critiques sense her 'photographic influence' they may actually be trying to explain the primordial presence of white light in all her works just as this article's insistence on folds underlines that O'Keeffe's colours are always presented as refracted light rays. As her colleague, Charles Dumuth, said of her palette: "Each colour almost regains the fun it must have felt within itself on forming the first rainbow".²⁶

This has deep spiritual significance. Manifestation is simply play or *Lila*. Emptiness in a picture – whether blank spaces or translucent tints - lets the light circulate and breathe. If not, the space is smothered and the fundamental unity is forgotten. All shapes, after all, are simply temporary displays made by turning space inside out. It is in this light that O'Keeffe paints folds.

O'Keeffe was always careful to deny the three-dimensional solidity for her forms. Her apparently illogical maze of flower petals and tilted pelvis cavities elicit a more abstract space –

at once interior and exterior. O’Keeffe thus finds the delicate balance along ‘the razor’s edge’ determining the particular while maintaining awareness of the whole. Her motifs have no contours. Their edges, albeit often very sharp, do not cut shapes out of the background. They are themselves the ridges and troughs of each other. They can even loop back on themselves so that when the viewer follows their borders, he never arrives at a whole circle but finds twists and turns that render interior and exterior space one.²⁷ The edge, in this way, negates the very form it outlines. With O’Keeffe, the whole, or entire canvas, is truly divided in a beautiful way without ever breaking its innate unity.

Her approach brings to mind an article in *Camera Work* which redefined the role of the artist as that of literally unravelling or reversing the process of creation: “translating with brush or chisel all things back to their private original glamour with the witchcraft of this holy pagan innocence unwinding the cords of complexity ... wound round and round the Holy Ghost of Beauty”.²⁸ The Stieglitz circle developed Straight Photography and abstract painting to reveal this primitive force. As O’Keeffe’s colleague, Arthur Dove, insisted, one must depict not form but formation. It is not the *object* but the *act* of creation or unfolding that counts.

What is more, O’Keeffe’s folds do not just suggest the known forms of the universe; she creates her own private universe of forms to show us how illusions manifest in our minds. For example, her creases delicately trace a ‘hard edge’. Such wrinkles symbolize all potential deformations of space. At the same time they point to the smooth, underlying continuity. This recalls O’Keeffe’s comment about her paintings of sun-bleached bones against the sky: “The blue that will always be there as it is now after all man’s destruction is finished”. As with *Pelvis II* (1944), all of her paintings transcend their immediate themes to become universal reminders of Wholeness.

This delicate balance between such a two-fold reality is explained from a Theoretical Physics point of view by David Bohm whose central theory is fittingly called ‘Enfolded order’. Bohm believes that forms ‘explicate’ themselves similarly from the Universe as a whole, and then ‘fold back in again’ only to re-emerge again, in ceaseless succession.²⁹ O’Keeffe’s folds illustrate the illusion of form itself, thus, shattering the normal vision in traditional Western art known as Alberti’s window. Her series of *Sky Above the Clouds* in the 1960s even reverse normal linear perspective so as to make the vanishing point fall upon the viewer standing a meter or so away from the canvas. In this way, it seems as if the pictorial space tips horizontally to form a flat shelf-like area spreading out before one’s eyes.

When almost blind, O’Keeffe painted a final canvas, *The Beyond* (1972), which explores a whole new dimension. It unrolls the horizon evenly along the entire width of the canvas. No longer following any vanishing point, the vista revealed seems to suggest a field of vision of 360 degrees simultaneously. In eliminating all refraction, blackness invades the foreground yet a line of luminous whiteness traces a suspended horizon against the boundless blue sky. O’Keeffe shows the viewer that all folds, all phenomena and lives themselves are fleeting ripples on the surface of infinite openness.

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Notes

- ¹ Robert M Cortes, 'Profiles - Abstraction – Flowers', *The New Yorker*, July 6, 1929, pp. 21–24 21
- ² Sara Whitaker Peters, *The Early Years – Becoming O'Keeffe*, Abbeville Press, New York, 1991. p. 27
- ³ O'Keeffe and Duchamp were regulars at the Stettheimer sisters' salons. Carrie's dollhouse is on permanent display at the Museum of the City of New York.
See : <http://brbl-archive.library.yale.edu/exhibitions/cvvpw/gallery/stetthe2.html>
- ⁴ Okakura Kakuzo, student and then colleague of Ernest Fenollosa in Japan, became curator in the Asian Arts department of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1904. Dow's 1913 edition of *Composition*, praised his work, *The Book of Tea* (1906).
- ⁵ Eldredge, *The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum* catalogue. New Mexico 1995. p. 101
- ⁶ Buisson, *Manuel pratique d'origami*, (Practical Manual of Origami) Celiv, Paris, 1990. pp. 103–4
- ⁷ *Ibid.* p.138
- ⁸ Sharyn Udall, *O'Keeffe and Texas*, The Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas 1998. p. 26
- ⁹ Brian Dijkstra, *Georgia O'Keeffe and the Eros of Place*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1998. p. 6
- ¹⁰ Charles Eldredge, catalogue. p. 16
- ¹¹ William Murrell Fisher, 'The Georgia O'Keeffe Drawings and Paintings at '291'' *Camera Work*, 49–50 June 1917. p. 5
- ¹² Charles Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern*, Yale University Press, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC 1993. 1 p. 75 (Letter from Albert Blohm to O'Keeffe, Yankers, New York, April 4, 1925) (Yale)
- ¹³ Roger Lipsey, *An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Modern Art*, Shambhala, Boston 1988. p. 393
- ¹⁴ Jan Garden Castro, *The Art & Life of Georgia O'Keeffe*, Crown Publishers, New York 1985. p. 135
- ¹⁵ Peters, *Op. Cit.* p.12
- ¹⁶ Katherine Hoffmann, *An Enduring Spirit: The Art of Georgia O'Keeffe*, Scarecrow Press, London 1984. p.84 (*O'Keeffe Trail*, New York Review of Books, March 31, 1977)
- ¹⁷ Sherman Paul, *Emerson's Angle of Vision: Man & Nature in American Experiences*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1952. p.76–78. Citing Emerson's *Journal*, Paul gives a detailed analysis of how Emerson's 'transparent eyeball' whose motifs become "chromatic entities, without resistance, mass or convexity". This study on O'Keeffe shows that such a vision can be suggested in a painting through certain plastic means such as avoiding that which solidifies forms (i.e. a vanishing point and shadows) with smoothly-blending multiple, atmospheric perspectives and that which renders opacity (i.e. chiaroscuro, heavy brushwork and effects of reflection) by keeping colours translucent and tones pure.
- ¹⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Nature,' *Selected Essays*, Penguin Classics, New York 1982. p. 39
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 34–35
- ²⁰ Emory Hollaway, (Editor), *Walt Whitman – Complete Poetry and Selected Prose and Letters*, Bodley Head, Random House 1978. pp. 356–57

²¹ Paul Rosenfeld, 'The Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe – The Work of the Young Artist,' *Vanity Fair*, Oct. 1922. pp. 56, 114

²² *Ibid.*, 56

²³ Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower my Struggle as a Woman Artist*, Anchor Books, Doubleday, New York 1977 pp. 141–43

²⁴ Richard Wilhelm (translator), *The Secret of the Golden Flower – A Chinese Book of Life* (with commentary by Carl Jung) A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego 1931 (1962). p.108

²⁵ Jack Cowart, & Juan Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keeffe Art and Letters*, National Gallery of Art, Washington D. C. 1987. p.4

²⁶ Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern*, Yale University Press, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 1993 p.165 (citation of 'Paints' 1926 Intimate Gallery 1927 n.p. Statement)

²⁷ Allan Watts, *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*, Collier Books, New York 1966. p13. Alan W. Watts, a student of Suzuki, explains: "God has no skin and no shape because there isn't any outside to him. (With a sufficiently intelligent child, I illustrate this with a Mobius strip – a ring of paper tape twisted once in such a way that it has only one side and one edge.) The inside and the outside of God are the same."

²⁸ Benjamin Decasseres, 'Rodin and the Eternality of the Pagan Soul' *Camera Work*, no. 34 April 1911. pp.13-4

²⁹ 'The New Scientist Interviews David Bohm,' *New Scientist*, 96, no. 1331, November 11 1982. pp.361–65
http://www.robert-temple.com/articles/NewScientist_DBohm.pdf

Georgia Totto O'Keeffe (November 15, 1887 – March 6, 1986) was an American artist. She was best known for her paintings of enlarged flowers, New York skyscrapers, and New Mexico landscapes. O'Keeffe has been recognized as the "Mother of American modernism". In 1905, O'Keeffe began her serious formal art training at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and then the Art Students League of New York, but she felt constrained by her lessons that focused on recreating or copying what was in nature. In Biography of Georgia O'Keeffe. Facts of Georgia O'Keeffe. Georgia O'Keeffe and her paintings. One of the first female painters to achieve worldwide acclaim from critics and the general public, Georgia O'Keeffe was an American painter who created innovative impressionist images that challenged perceptions and evolved constantly throughout her career. After studying at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago she attended the Art Students League in New York, studying under William Merritt Chase. Though she impressed the league with her oil painting "Dead Rabbit with C