



Artwork of the Week

Georgia O'Keeffe, *The White Flower*

(White Trumpet Flower), 1932. Oil on canvas. Gift of Mrs. Inez Grant Parker in memory of Earle W. Grant. 1971.12.

THE SAN DIEGO MUSEUM OF ART

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One of The San Diego Museum of Art's most popular works is this beautiful oil on canvas of a white trumpet lily, painted in 1932 from such an intimate perspective that it nearly dissolves into pure color and form. As the artist Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) explained about her composition and the extraordinarily close-up vantage point, it was meant to “make even busy New Yorkers take time to see what I see of flowers.”

The enlargement and close cropping of her flower paintings likely was also influenced by photography, at the time an increasingly recognized art form. O'Keeffe's marriage to Alfred Stieglitz and close friendships with other photographers such as Paul Strand and Ansel Adams give further evidence of her connection to photographic approaches.

Working in the predominantly male field of art, O'Keeffe chafed at being described as a one of the best

woman painters of her era rather than as simply one of the best painters, period. When her works were assumed to depict female anatomy, she disagreed. “You hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower,” she complained in 1939. “You write about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower—and I don’t.”

This work by O’Keeffe resonates powerfully, presenting a recognizable form in a nearly abstract way, with sinuous, enticing lines that fill the canvas, seemingly pushing against the edges of the painting and leading into live space. You can move around and within the work while standing still in front of it.

The sensation of viewing this painting is a reminder that everyone should take the time to look, examine, and enjoy the works in our collection, and experience each piece in your own unique way. Take your time. Take respite. The collection is always available for viewing online through the Museum’s website.

Get more information about the
wonderful works of art in the
Museum's collection

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