

Quotations of Georgia O'Keeffe

compiled by Phillip W. Weiss

Part One

I get shapes in my head.

That was my country.

Use a big canvas.

Roaring waterfalls.

It was pretty difficult but I stayed.

That's why you don't try to love to be a hundred.

Because there were no flowers, I began picking up bones.

I wanted to take something home to work on.

I wondered what I could take home that could continue what I felt about the country and I couldn't think of anything to take home but a barrel of bones.

Painted my first skull from the barrel of bones.

I'll make my picture a red, white and blue, an American painting.

The bones do not symbolize death to me. They are shapes that I enjoy.

They please me and I have enjoyed them very much in relation to the sky.

So I had a reddish bone with a yellow sky.

I wanted to be a painter.

I'm going to be a painter.

They never approved of me.

My mother and I never agreed.

Who wants to spend their life painting rabbits and copper bowls?

I thought they [Rodin paintings] were a lot of scribble.

Part Two

I hadn't been taught any way of my own.

Fill a space in a beautiful way. It was a new idea to me.

I love it [Texas].

You could drive right out into space.

There wasn't anything to please myself. I don't remember feeling free. I was busy.

I can see shapes. It's as if my mind creates shapes that I don't know about.

Virginia O'Keeffe. That must be me.

I began painting the evening star. I think there are eight variations of this.

He [Stieglitz] photographed my hands.

I lived at Lake George in the summers for ten years. It was very pretty but wasn't made for me.

The men didn't like my color. My color was hopeless. I like colors.

Part Three

If I would paint that flower the size it is nobody would ever look at it. If I enjoy the flower and would paint it, I would have to paint it big so they would have to look at it.

They were talking about their own selves, not about me.

I got on with them [male artists] very well because I did the hard work for them.

Dove always liked me and I always liked Dove.

I find people very difficult.

He [Stieglitz] was a city man and I was a country person.

I didn't think of sacrificing, that is what I did. That is where I belonged.
This is my first New York. That was on forty-seventh street.

I think New York is wonderful. It's like a dream. It always makes European cities look like villages.

I lived over the river, the East River in New York.

They looked like tall, thin bottles.

You have to do something. I can't leave that corner empty.

Your eye will see sunspots if you look hard at anything sometimes.

I was interested in what he [Stieglitz] did and he was interested in what I did.

You have to paint the Taos church.

He [Stieglitz] didn't let me go, I just went.

I never was that interested in doing people.

Part Four

The crosses out here [New Mexico] were dour, dark.

The Catholic Church is a like a veil over the country.

The French crosses are sort of gay.

I always called it the black place.

I walked all along the top.

Sometimes the Indians would be under the trees.

I tried to paint what I saw.

I just had to settle down to try.

Mister Stieglitz had died and I had settled his estate and I could live where I wanted to.

This house was all here as a shell, and it was a pig-pen.

I used to come just to look at that door.

This door is what I bought the house for.

I had to have that door.

I wanted a garden.

If you work hard enough you can get almost anything.

The clouds looked so solid.

I went around the world flying.

There's a time in the evening when the whole world seems to have a glow for about ten or fifteen minutes.

A great big cool square in the evening light.

I have been very fortunate.

The things I have been doing have been in touch with my times to that people have liked it.

Some people seem to be luckier than others.

I rather be doing something I really wanted to do.

Source:

Adato, Perry Miller, director. *Georgia O'Keeffe*. 1977.