



Georgia O'Keeffe
American, 1887 - 1986

Winter Road I

1963

oil on canvas

overall: 55.9 x 45.7 cm (22 x 18 in.)

framed: 56.4 x 46.4 cm (22 3/16 x 18 1/4 in.)

Gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation 1995.4.1

ENTRY

During the early 1960s, Georgia O'Keeffe made a group of photographs, drawings, and paintings of the road that passed by her house in Abiquiú, New Mexico. She wrote about creating one of the photographs:

Two walls of my room in the Abiquiu house are glass and from one window I see the road to Espanola, Santa Fe and the world. The road fascinates me with its ups and downs, and finally its wide sweep as it speeds toward the wall of my hilltop to go past me. I had made two or three snaps of it with a camera. For one of them I turned the camera at a sharp angle to get all the road. It was accidental that I made the road seem to stand up in the air, but it amused me and I began drawing and painting it as a new shape. The trees and mesa beside it were unimportant for that painting—it was just the road. [1]

The photograph she referenced was probably [*Looking from Bedroom at Abiquiu Towards Espanola, New Mexico*] [fig. 1], in which the road curves and disappears into the Cerro Pedernal mesa in the Jemez Mountains. O'Keeffe, who is often interpreted through photographs made of her by others—especially those by her husband, Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946)—was also a photographer herself. [2] In the case of *Winter Road I*, her photography and painting worked in tandem.

The quasi-abstract, asymmetric composition of *Winter Road I* is two-dimensional, with no indication of spatial recession. The elegant, undulating brown line that

signifies the road meanders across the canvas. O’Keeffe has removed all of the supporting scenery in the painting, which is without a trace of the hills, mesa, and trees that are visible in her photograph. She loosened her reductive approach and included suggestions of landscape elements in two later, horizontal-format versions of the theme. *Road to the Ranch* (1964, private collection) and *Road Past the View* [fig. 2] both represent another view of the road descending from O’Keeffe’s ranch until “it disappears in the hills below the mesa with the Sangre de Cristo mountains on beyond.” [3]

The artist’s desire to eliminate spatial recession and recreate her perception that the road in the photograph seemed “to stand up in the air” drew on her recent experiences traveling high above the earth’s surface in an airplane as well as her elevated vantage point from her home atop a mesa. The flat, linear quality of *Winter Road I* relates the painting to her extensive series of dry desert riverbeds such as *It Was Yellow and Pink II* [fig. 3]. While her road and riverbed works evoke aerial views of the landscape, O’Keeffe also constantly experimented with organic ambiguities—the form of a gently winding river or road mimics that of a tree branch, for example.

The linear elegance of *Winter Road I* and its emphasis on formal balance and unfilled space reminiscent of *sumi-e* ink painting may reflect O’Keeffe’s long-held interest in Japanese and Chinese art. The artist owned a number of books on Chinese and Japanese art, including an exhibition catalog on Chinese calligraphy and painting that had been published the year before she executed this painting. [4] Through severe economy of form, verging on abstraction and invoking wide-ranging associations, this composition expresses the serene, spacious southwestern landscape.

Robert Torchia
July 24, 2024

COMPARATIVE FIGURES



fig. 1 Georgia O'Keeffe, *[Looking from Bedroom at Abiquiu Towards Espanola, New Mexico]*, 1957–1958, gelatin silver print, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Anonymous Gift, 1977. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY



fig. 2 Georgia O'Keeffe, *Road Past the View*, 1964, oil on canvas, Collection of Carl and Marilyn Thoma. Image © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artist Rights Society (ARS), courtesy of the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation



fig. 3 Georgia O'Keeffe, *It Was Yellow and Pink II*, 1959, oil on canvas, Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe, 1987.137. Image © The Cleveland Museum of Art

NOTES

- [1] Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York, 1976), unpaginated text accompanying plate 104.
- [2] Many of her photographs are in the collection of the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, <https://collections.okeeffemuseum.org/object/#subquery=photographs>.
- [3] Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York, 1976), unpaginated text accompanying plate 104.
- [4] Laurence Sickman, ed., *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting in the Collection of John M. Crawford* (New York, 1962). For a discussion of O'Keeffe's library, see Ruth E. Fine, Elizabeth Glassman, and Juan Hamilton, *The Book Room: Georgia O'Keeffe's Library in Abiquiu* (Santa Fe, NM, 1997); see also the review of this exhibition catalog by

Bonnie L. Grad, *Archives of American Art Journal* 37 (1997): 30.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The medium-weight, plain-weave support is unlined and remains mounted on its original stretcher. The stretcher had been used for an earlier work that was formerly mounted on its opposite side. The artist applied a thin white ground layer. Infrared reflectography reveals the presence of a charcoal underdrawing that outlines the road. The artist used only two colors, white and brown. The road was painted first, although the paler brown part in the distance was created with a mixture of brown and white and worked wet in wet. The paint was applied thinly, and the texture of the brushstrokes is evident. The support's weave pattern is quite distinct, providing the white expanse with textural variation. The painting is in good condition. The surface is coated with a thin layer of synthetic resin varnish.

Michael Swicklik

July 24, 2024

PROVENANCE

The artist [1887-1986]; estate of the artist; 1993 to The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, Abiquiú, New Mexico; gift 1995 to NGA.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1966 Georgia O'Keeffe: An exhibition of the work of the artist from 1915 to 1966, Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, March-July 1966, unnumbered catalogue, repro. on cover, as *The Winter Road*.

1966 Georgia O'Keeffe, The Art Museum, The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, September-October 1966, unnumbered catalogue.

1970 Georgia O'Keeffe, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Art, 1970-1971, no. 118, repro., as *The Winter Road*.

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1987 Georgia O'Keeffe: 1887-1986, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Art Institute of Chicago; Dallas Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1987-1989, no. 115, repro. (exh. cat. titled Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters).

1993 Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern, The Hayward Gallery, London; El Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City; Yokohama Museum of Art, 1993-1994, no. 83, repro.

1997 Birth of the Cool. American Painting - from Georgia O'Keeffe to Christopher Wool, Deichtorhallen Hamburg; Kunsthaus Zürich, 1997, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 3.

1998 O'Keeffe and Texas, Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, 1998, no. 48, repro.

1999 Georgia O'Keeffe: The Poetry of Things, Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Dallas Museum of Art; Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1999-2000, unnumbered cat., pl. 61, fig. 26 (shown only in Washington).

2001 O'Keeffe's O'Keeffes: The Artist's Collection, Milwaukee Art Museum; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark, 2001-2002, no. 73, repro.

2006 Georgia O'Keeffe: Color and Conservation, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, 2006, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

2007 Georgia O'Keeffe: Nature and Abstraction, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Vancouver Art Gallery, 2007-2008, no. 74, repro.

2013 Im Tempel des Ich. Das Künstlerhaus als Gesamtkunstwerk Europa und Amerika 1800-1948 [In the Temple of Self. [The Artist's Residence as a Total Work of Art, Europe and America 1800-1949], Museum Villa Stuck, Munich, 2013-2014, no. 17 of the O'Keeffe section of the catalogue, repro.

2016 Georgia O'Keeffe, Tate Modern, London; Bank Austria Kunstforum, Vienna; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2016-2017, unnumbered catalogue.

2019 Aftereffect: Georgia O'Keeffe and Contemporary Painting, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, 2019, no catalogue.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1971 Eldredge, Charles C. "Georgia O'Keeffe: the development of an American modern." Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1971: 102-103, fig. 70.
- 1976 O'Keeffe, Georgia. *Georgia O'Keeffe*. New York, 1976: opposite pl. 104.
- 1984 Hoffman, Katherine. *An Enduring Spirit: The Art of Georgia O'Keeffe*. Metuchen, NJ, 1984: 117-118.
- 1987 Cowart, Jack, Juan Hamilton, and Sarah Greenough. *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Art Institute of Chicago; Dallas Museum of Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1987-1989. Washington, 1987: color pl. 115.
- 1991 Eldredge, Charles C. *Georgia O'Keeffe*. New York, 1991: 146, repro.
- 1993 Eldredge, Charles C. *Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern* Exh. cat. Hayward Gallery, London; El Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City; and Yokohama Museum of Art, 1993-1994. New Haven and London, 1993: 209, color pl. 83.
- 1999 Lynes, Barbara Buhler. *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*. 2 vols. New Haven and London, 1999: 2:907, no. 1477, color repro.
- 2004 Joseph S. Czestochowski, ed., *Georgia O'Keeffe: Vision of the Sublime*. Memphis, 2004: pl. 78.
- 2016 Barson, Tanya, ed. *Georgia O'Keeffe*. Exh. cat. Tate Modern, London; Bank Austria Kunstforum, Vienna; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2016-2017. London, 2016: 152 fig. 136, 153, 187, 225.
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To cite: Robert Torchia, "Georgia O'Keeffe/*Winter Road I*/1963," *American Paintings, 1900–1945*, NGA Online Editions, <https://purl.org/nga/collection/artobject/91449> (accessed October 19, 2024).