

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

BACKDROP:

From 1997-2004, the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation conducted interviews with 46 individuals, some in collaboration with the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. These oral histories are now in the collection of the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum and are being reviewed and processed.

PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:

- Karl Bode – friend and neighbor of Georgia O'Keeffe from 1949 until her death in 1986.
- Maria Chabot – friend and employee of O'Keeffe.
- Brian Garfield – Garfield's mother, Frances O'Brien, was a long-time friend of O'Keeffe.
- Norma Marin, the widow of John Marin, Jr., the son of painter John Marin, a close friend of O'Keeffe and member of the Stieglitz group of artists.
- Lucille Webb, the widow of photographer Todd Webb and friend of O'Keeffe.

As a 20 year old, John Lawson was on the summer staff at Ghost Ranch during the summer of 1960. The staff at Ghost Ranch was invited to have tea with Georgia O'Keeffe at her house in August.

"She offered us tea and then walked around and spoke a little bit to each of our groups of 3 or 4 people, and I just could not take my eyes off her. She just seemed to have an aura and I was watching her. And for some reason I turned around and looked around, and I noticed that every single person - all of us in our 20s or late teens - every single person was entranced in the same way that as I was because everybody had their eyes on whatever she was doing. I've never seen anyone else that had that same kind of magnetic appearance."

Renick Stevenson accompanied a friend to Santa Fe in the early 1970s to meet Georgia O'Keeffe. Mr. Stevenson was "drinking tequila and taking peyote, while they were talking, and then at the end of their visit, she looked at me and she said "Honey, she said, you know you are a good painter but it looks like you are going to drink up all your art. That was back in the early 70s, and then I worked on a new piece. The whole point of this story was that Georgia really sorta saved my life and my art because I got sober in 1977 and have painted ever since That was all due to Georgia confronting me about my drinking and my drug-ging and not being a good steward of my gift of being a painter."

NEW EFFORTS:

The Museum's Research Center has begun new efforts to collect oral histories from individuals who knew O'Keeffe or from individuals who can provide context for the landscape and Northern New Mexico environment in which she lived.

- Voice mail technology is being utilized to gather brief recollections from individuals.
- The Research Center is partnering with student interns from the Photography Department at the Santa Fe University of Art and Design to interview subjects and create video oral histories.
- Pre-interviews with subjects are being audio recorded by Museum staff with the intent conducting in-depth follow-up interviews over numerous sessions.

Things to consider before embarking on an oral history—

Conduct a self-study and reflect on:

- the purpose of your collection and goals for each of the interviews
- methodology and technological needs
- organization of your resources
- legalities and rights management
- cataloging and preservation issues
- guidelines and standards
- access and outreach

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

"If you can believe in what you are and keep to your line – that is the most one can do with life."

– LETTER TO MARIA CHABOT, 1944.

THE MISSION OF THE MUSEUM

To inspire all current and future generations, the Museum preserves, presents and advances the artistic legacy of Georgia O'Keeffe and Modernism through innovative public engagement, education, and research.

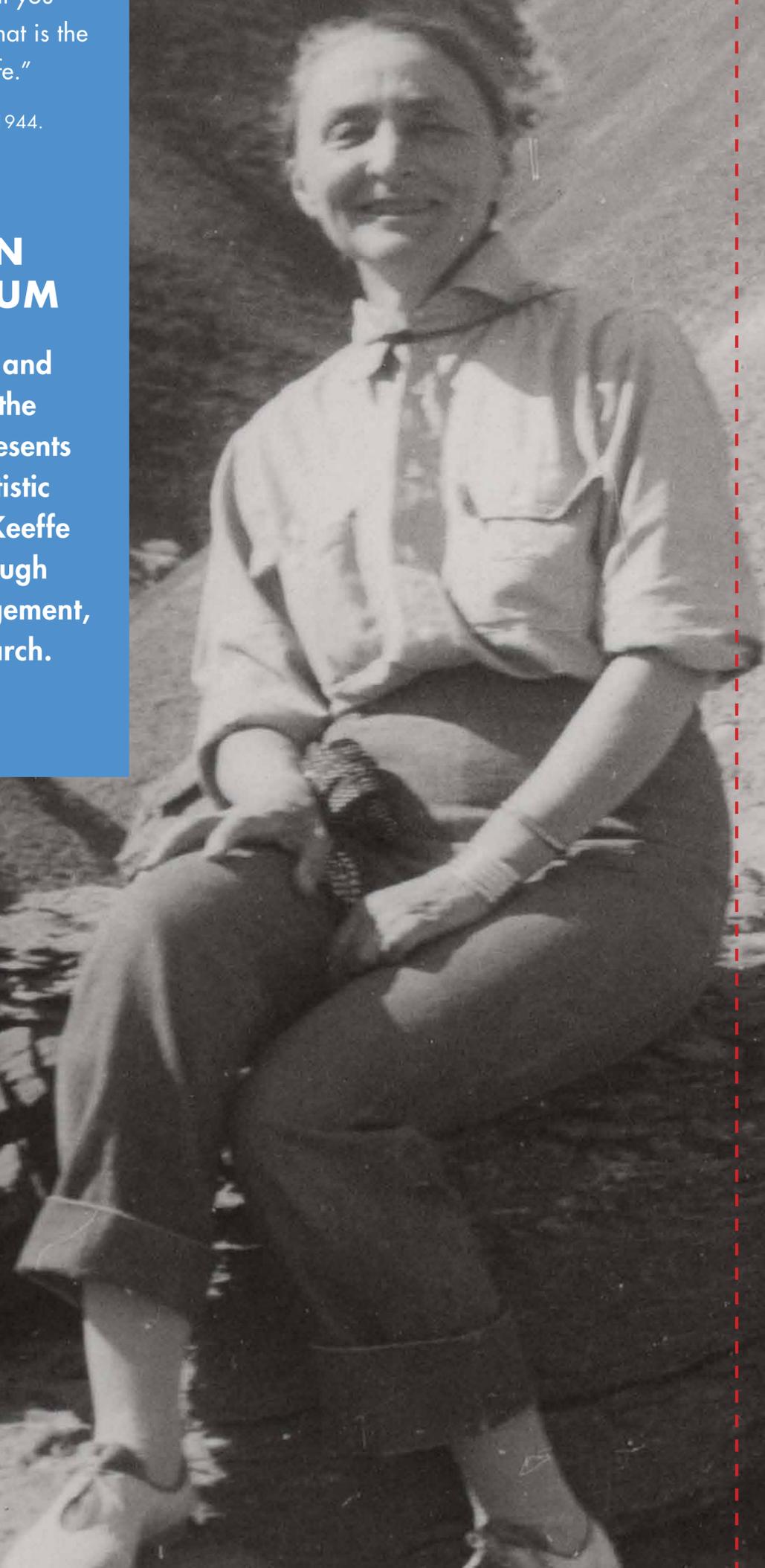


Image Credit

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, CONTACT:

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