

# Georgia O'Keeffe: In Poetry, the Offspring of an Icon

Georgia O'Keeffe is one of the most celebrated artists of the 20th century. Her bold and iconic paintings of flowers, landscapes, and urban scenes have inspired countless artists, writers, and musicians. In poetry, O'Keeffe's work has been a particularly rich source of inspiration, giving rise to a diverse body of poems that celebrate her unique vision and artistic legacy.

## May Swenson: "Georgia O'Keeffe"

One of the most famous poems inspired by O'Keeffe's work is May Swenson's "Georgia O'Keeffe." Published in 1970, the poem is a meditation on O'Keeffe's iconic flower paintings. Swenson writes:



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by Alexandre Dumas

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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***“Her flower fierce and pure,***

***A hawk's cry in a desert,  
An ecstasy beyond our touch.”***

In these lines, Swenson captures the essence of O'Keeffe's flower paintings, which are at once beautiful and threatening. Her flowers are not delicate blooms, but rather powerful forces of nature, capable of both seduction and destruction. Swenson's poem is a testament to the power of O'Keeffe's art to evoke strong emotions and to challenge our perceptions of the natural world.

**Rebecca Tamás: "Petunia, No. 2"**

Another poet who has been inspired by O'Keeffe's work is Rebecca Tamás. Her poem "Petunia, No. 2" is a close reading of O'Keeffe's 1925 painting of the same name. Tamás writes:

““

***“A woman's mouth,***

***Or the mouth of a sea anemone.***

***A trumpet flower,***

***Or a butterfly's wing.”***

In these lines, Tamás explores the many possible interpretations of O'Keeffe's painting. She sees the petunia as a symbol of female sexuality, as well as a reminder of the beauty and fragility of the natural world. Tamás' poem is a tribute to the power of O'Keeffe's art to inspire multiple readings and interpretations.

## **Amy Lowell: "Sea Shell"**

Amy Lowell was an early champion of O'Keeffe's work. In her poem "Sea Shell," published in 1921, Lowell celebrates O'Keeffe's ability to capture the essential beauty of natural forms.



***“Curled like a sleeping cat,***

***With faintest hint of shell.***

***Smooth, polished, and serene,***

***A fragment of the sea.”***

Lowell's poem is a testament to the power of O'Keeffe's art to transcend the boundaries of time and place. Her seashell is both a specific object and a timeless symbol of the beauty and wonder of the natural world.

## **Carolyn Kizer: "Prothalamion"**

Carolyn Kizer's poem "Prothalamion" is a more personal meditation on O'Keeffe's work. The poem is addressed to O'Keeffe herself, and it explores the ways in which her art has influenced Kizer's own life and work.



***“I have seen your flowers,***

***Georgia, and they are strange,***

***Unnatural, almost,***

***But they are beautiful.”***

Kizer's poem is a celebration of O'Keeffe's unique vision and her ability to challenge conventional notions of beauty. Kizer's poem is also a testament to the power of art to inspire and to change lives.

The poems discussed in this article are just a few examples of the many ways in which poets have engaged with Georgia O'Keeffe's work. These poems celebrate O'Keeffe's unique vision, her bold use of color and form, and her ability to capture the essential beauty of the natural world. In the hands of these poets, O'Keeffe's paintings become a source of inspiration, a catalyst for personal reflection, and a testament to the power of art to change lives.



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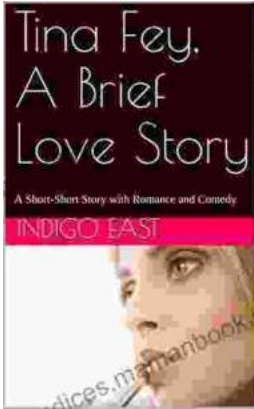
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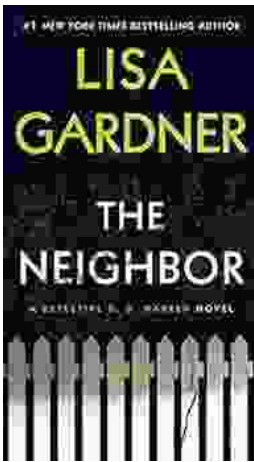
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