

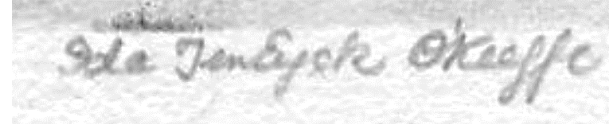
# Ida O'Keeffe

*Painter, American Modernism  
Modern Period of the Arts*

**Born: October 23, 1889, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin**

**Died: September 27, 1961, Whittier, California**

Ida was the third child in the O'Keeffe family and was one of Georgia's younger sisters. Like Georgia, Ida, had two grandmothers who painted, but only for family and friends, not professionally (as was the custom for female painters at that time). Ida, along with Georgia and their sister Anita, learned art with their mother, then with professional watercolorists. (Some family members later said, in the early days, Ida was the one everyone thought had the most talent) Sadly, the family finances collapsed enough that Ida had to work rather than go straight to school, and she chose to teach art.



After Georgia gained gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz's support and patronage, she left for NYC. Ida soon followed, though to enroll as a student nurse at Mt. Sinai Hospital, serving in midst of WWI and later, the Spanish Flu epidemic. Georgia took Ida under her wing socially and introduced Ida to many of their artist and art-critic friends.

In 1925, while working as a private nurse with a family in Connecticut, Ida decided to take up painting again. Like Georgia, she'd been trained in watercolors, not oils (watercolors being traditional for amateur and female artists, while oils were reserved for "real" professional-male-artists). Ida wrote to her sister Georgia and new brother-in-law Alfred, and both gave her tips on working.

In 1927, Georgia curated a show at the Opportunity gallery, exhibiting both her and Ida's works, as well as works done by their grandmothers, Isabel (Wychoff) Totto and Catherine Marie (Shortall) O'Keeffe. Ida's works were popular enough she enrolled in Columbia Teacher's college for formal art training and earned a Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) by 1932.

Things seemed to be looking up. In March of 1933, The Delphic Studios displayed work by yet another O'Keeffe sister, Catherine and the O'Keeffe family, and in April, Delphic gave a solo show to Ida.

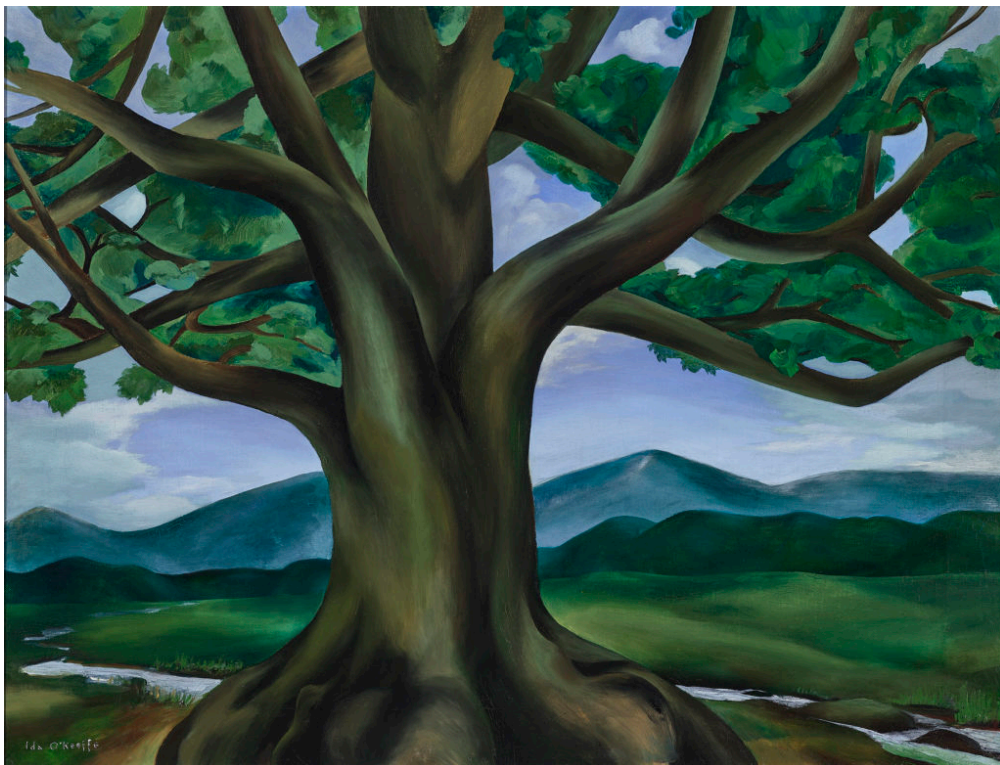
But Georgia had his rock-bottom. After a publicly professional failure, and facing problems with her marriage, she had been hospitalized for severe depression in 1933, and was released just as Ida's show opened. Seeing her sister's art so popular, Georgia, threatened professionally at a time she felt vulnerable personally, demanded her sisters stop painting and competing with her. Catherine agreed. Ida did not. It cost her Georgia's support, and the once-close sisters never spoke again.

The Great Depression did not help. During the next 10 years, Ida moved 13 times, working as an art teacher, commercial designer or nurse, before settling in California near her other sisters, Anita and Claudia. There she found her own community and became an established artist in her own right. After Ida and her sisters died, her paintings were sold, and thus, one O'Keeffe's works were spread throughout the California community, where they still, occasionally, come up for sale.

## **“Creation” 1935**



## **Royal Oak of Tennessee 1932**





## Lighthouse IV (1931)



This painting is one of a series on display at Ida's fateful 1933 solo exhibition. While the first one is now lost, these lighthouses were highly praised by many critics, and was one of the likely reasons Georgia feared being overshadowed by her sister.

## Lighthouse V (ca. 1931)





## Tulips (1936)



As you look at these pictures, ask yourself, how do these paintings by sister painters compare? What things look similar—what looks unique to each woman?