

## Georgia O'Keeffe - "Sky Above Clouds IV"



*Painted in the summer of 1965, when Georgia O'Keeffe was 77 years old, this monumental work culminates a series based on the artist's experiences as an airplane passenger during the 1950s. Working in Abiquiu, New Mexico, O'Keeffe began around 1963 to capture the endless expanses of clouds she had observed from airplane windows during trips all over the world. Beginning with a relatively realistic depiction of small white clouds on a three-by-four foot canvas, she progressed to more stylized images of the motif on large surfaces, ultimately extending her ideas across a canvas that spanned the entire 24-foot wide of her garage. Given its scale and the predominance of rounded shapes in the composition, Sky Above Clouds IV has often been compared to Claude Monet's famous waterlilies murals.*

O'Keeffe wrote..

*"I painted a painting eight feet high and twenty four feet wide - it kept me working every minute from six am till eight or nine at night as I had to finish before it was cold - I worked in the garage and it had no heat - Such a size is of course ridiculous but I had it in my head as something I wanted to do for a couple of years, so I finally got at it and had a fine time - and there it is - Not my best and not my worst".*

*In 1970 a retrospective of O'Keeffe work was scheduled for installation at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the*

*San Francisco Museum of Art; Sky Above Clouds IV was never shown in San Francisco, however, because it would not pass through any door of the museum. The painting thus remained on loan to the Art Institute for more than a decade, while the artist and public minded collectors of her art arranged for it to become one of the highlight's of the museum's permanent collection..*

*The special relation between O'Keeffe and the Art Institute began in 1903, when she enrolled briefly as a student at the School of the Art Institute. Her first museum retrospective was organized here in 1943. Later as executor of the estate of her husband, the pioneering American photographer and art dealer Alfred Stieglitz, O'Keeffe presented the Art Institute with an important group of Modernist works, including a number of her own. She continued to make significant additions to this bequest until her death, at age 98, in 1986...*