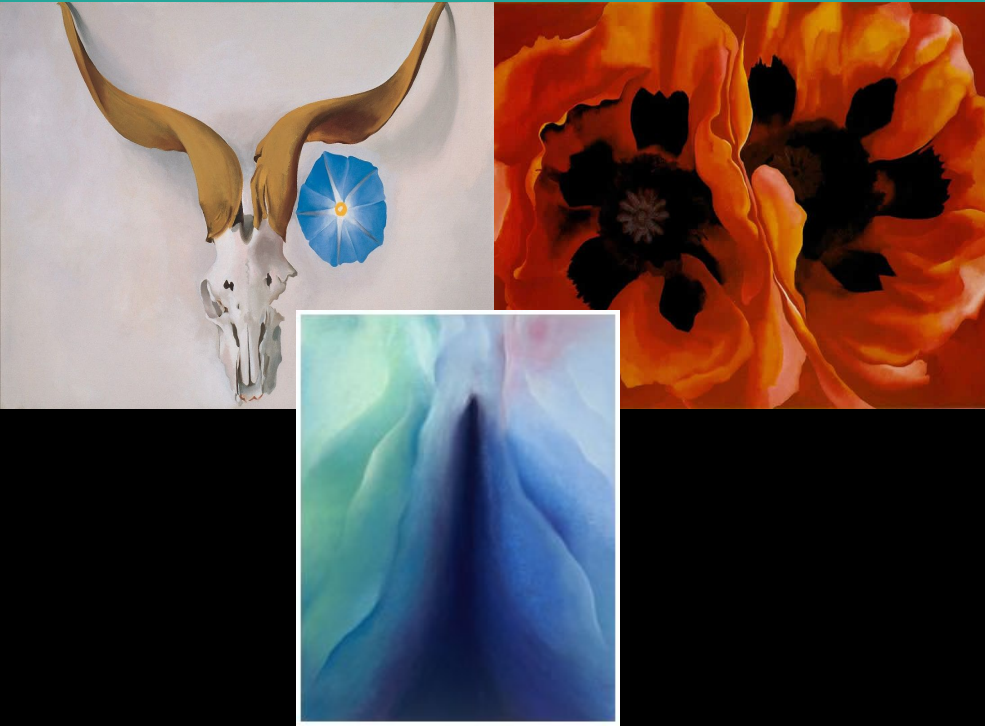


Comparative Study: Celebration of Life and Beauty in Art

Melissa Fabila



Introduction: International artist, Georgia O'Keeffe, and local Milwaukee artist, Patricia Gilman Graham, show the celebration of life through some of their artwork. This theme is shown by **creating** watercolor, oil, acrylic and pastel paintings that use bright, light or soft **colors**. The two also demonstrate this theme by including nature, such as flowers, leaves and landscapes. Their pieces show the beginning and/or peak of the life cycle, or the near end.

American Modernist Artist: Georgia O'Keeffe



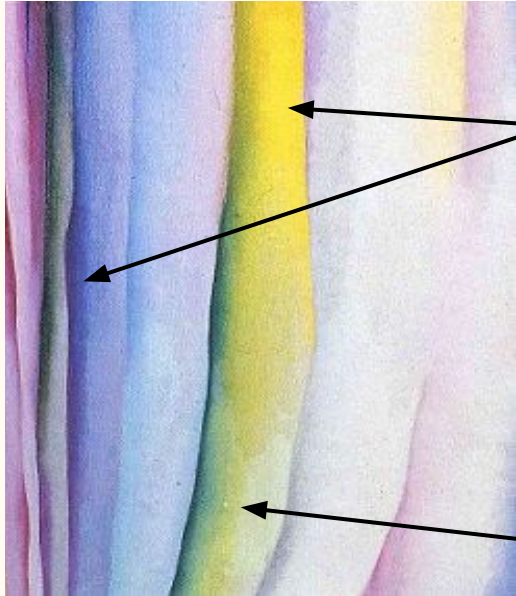
"Georgia O'Keeffe." *Georgia O'Keeffe*. Meet the Masters, 2015. Web. 27 Sept. 2016. From <http://meetthemasters.com/artist/okeeffe/>

Georgia O'Keeffe is a major figure in American art who stays true to herself by having used oils and watercolors for several decades, even when multiple art trends were rising. She painted flowers, animal bones and landscapes that were around her studios in Lake George, New York, and in Taos, New Mexico. These paintings were considered inventive, and eventually became her signature style.

O'Keeffe is known for her famous flower paintings and landscapes, Many of these paintings depict nature's beauty, and some of her pieces could relate back to the celebration of life. Examples include the blooming of a flower for birth, or a grey barren landscape to portray death or loneliness.

Her use of **color**, **balance**, and **form** in many of her pieces have allowed for critics to create their own interpretations of her work, specifically her flower paintings. Many have related them back to female genitalia, which she has denied.

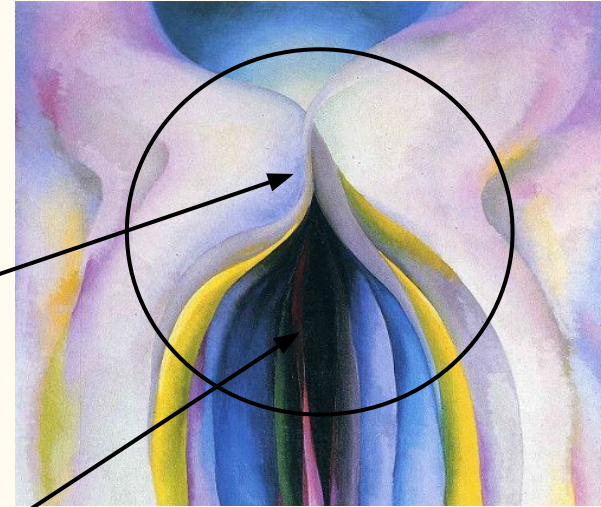
Analysis of Formal Qualities: “Grey Lines with Black, Blue and Yellow, 1923”



The **contrast** of warm and cool **colors** can be seen here, for there's yellow, blue, pink, white, and purple. This leads viewers to move their attention to the bright yellow.

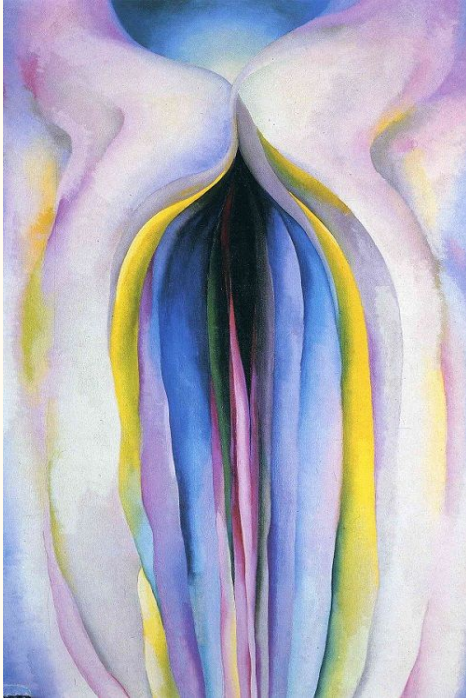
I noticed the fluidity at the top of the painting, for the **shapes** are organic and smooth, like the pedal of a flower.

The **colors** and the **shapes** blend in well together, creating a sort of **unity** within the piece.



Overall, the painting gives off an abstract appearance, that illustrates plant life and its beauty, and it shows this through the **emphasis** of the folds and other **shapes** used in the piece.

Interpretation of Function and Purpose: “Grey Lines with Black, Blue and Yellow”



In this painting, O’Keeffe presents rippling folds and clear, three-dimensional **forms** that work together to create an image of powerful uncertainty, which could suggest either portrayals of the beauty hidden deep within the structures of flowers or, as some critics have argued, portrayals of the female anatomy, which she has consistently denied.

The abstract look and **movement** of the piece allows the viewers to interpret the painting however they want to interpret it, which is what O’Keeffe tries to accomplish with her body of work.

When discussing about her paintings, usually the ones that depict cropped images of natural objects, O’Keeffe says, “Nothing is less real than realism. Details are confusing. It is only by selection, by elimination, by **emphasis**, that we get at the real meaning of things.”

Evaluation of Cultural Significance: “Grey Lines with Black, Blue and Yellow, 1923”

O’Keeffe took an interest in painting small, magnified natural objects, generally painting magnified versions of flowers and leaves. O’Keeffe’s cultural inspiration for these kinds of body of works is her everyday life. Inspired by what she and others see around inside or outside, O’Keeffe’s flower and leaf paintings are a common part of our life, with almost every culture using flowers in some way whether it be in a celebration, a holiday, or just viewing them out on the ground.

The overall cultural significance with “Grey Lines with Black, Blue and Yellow, 1923” is nature itself, since nature provided as the base for this piece, allowing O’Keeffe to **create** the smooth **forms** that are found in her other nature artworks.



Rose Festival in Chandigarh, India



Festival of Flowers in Medellín, Colombia

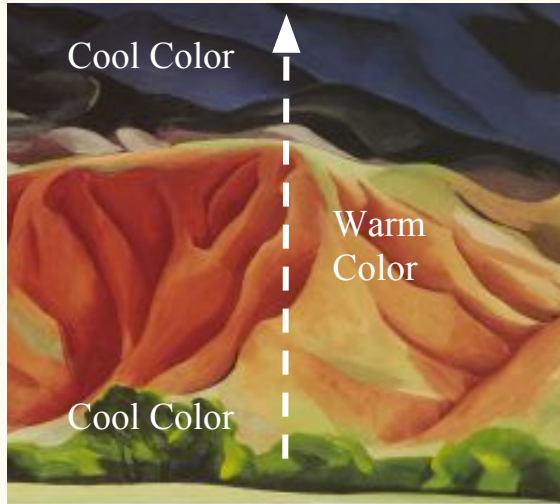
Interpretation of Function and Purpose: “Black Mesa Landscape, New Mexico/Out Back of Marie's II”



"Georgia O'Keeffe." *CBS News*. CBS Interactive, 15 Nov. 2015. Web. 29 Jan. 2017.

O'Keeffe's landscape paintings offer viewers a glimpse into what she often sees in her time in New Mexico. Many of her landscape paintings are inspired by the plateaus, hills, sky, and wildlife in New Mexico, and these artworks allow the viewer to get a sense of what O'Keeffe's perspective on the land is like, viewing it through her eyes. Her landscape paintings provide personal experiences to the viewer, and may provoke strong feelings. For instance, in this piece, the combination of the dark mountains, the plain hills and the greenery below give off a sensation of confusion, since the viewer's eyes can not focus on the **movement** of the artwork, or the **colors** used. Some may detect **unity** within the piece, while others will argue that the work appears muddled.

Analysis of Formal Qualities: “Black Mesa Landscape, New Mexico/Out Back of Marie's II”



I noticed a sharp **contrast** between the dark violets and blacks of the mountains, to the light browns and oranges of the desert.

The **movement** in the way O’Keeffe painted the mountains allows the viewer to get a clear sense of the landscape and how O’Keeffe’s perspective of it is **fluid** and smooth, compared to the rocky, unsteadiness of real mountains.



The structure and **colors** used in the painting correspond with the cycle of life, with the greenery in the bottom depict the early stage of life or youth, while the plain hills tie in with adolescence and early adulthood, leaving the dark mountains and clear sky with dotage and eventually demise.

Evaluation of Cultural Significance: “Black Mesa Landscape, New Mexico/Out Back of Marie's II”

O’Keeffe’s “Black Mesa Landscape, New Mexico/Out Back of Marie's II” was inspired by the Rio Grande Valley she’d seen in New Mexico. O’Keeffe had lived in New Mexico for many years, especially after the death of her husband. Georgia O’Keeffe found much inspiration in the New Mexico culture, from the **forms** of the desert landscapes and architecture, to the colorful Navajo culture in the state.

"The country, my God. I saw the country from the hill up there," she said in an interview. "The road went high over the hill and I looked out over the valley, and the red hills and these cliffs go quite a distance -- and nobody was there" (CBS, 1981).



"Colorado Plateau." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 29 Jan. 2017.

Making Comparisons and Connections: “Black Mesa Landscape, New Mexico/Out Back of Marie's II” and “Grey Lines with Black, Blue and Yellow”

“Black Mesa Landscape, New Mexico/Out Back of Marie's II”

- ❖ Inspired by landscape in New Mexico.
- ❖ Most of the **shapes** can be defined; painting clearly shows it is a landscape.
- ❖ Not exactly asymmetrical.
- ❖ Image is not magnified.
- ❖ No **balance** can be seen in piece.

Both Artworks

- ❖ Inspiration both derive from nature.
- ❖ **Movement** in both pieces can be seen.
- ❖ Both contain the combination of warm and cool **hues**.
- ❖ Provide **contrast** within the artwork.

“Grey Lines with Black, Blue and Yellow”

- ❖ Inspired by flowers and leaves.
- ❖ **Shape** is organic, not clearly defined.
- ❖ Painting is asymmetrical.
- ❖ Image is magnified.
- ❖ **Balance** in the painting can be seen.

Fine Artist: Patricia Gilman Graham



Fabila, Melissa. "Patricia Gilman Graham." *Gallery Visits*. N.p., 2016. Web. 27 Sept. 2016. From <http://melissafabila.weebly.com/patricia-gilman-graham.html>

Patricia G. Graham has been drawing and painting for many years. She has a 31 year career in art education with Milwaukee Public Schools and UW Milwaukee. Graham had her students explore many different types of media. Her work can be found around Wisconsin and in the San Francisco Bay area, and in private collections around the country.

Graham's fascination with nature has played an enormous part with her inspiration for her body of works. She has been interested with it ever since she was a little girl, and continues to be the base of inspiration for her work. Graham's view on her paintings is that she feels like they represent freedom and transparency. In the end, when it comes to her work, Graham says, "I can only attempt to describe what my paintings are about; ultimately, they must speak for themselves."

Interpretation of Function and Purpose: “Acrylic 36” x 36”” and “Pastel 30” x 38””



"Patricia Gilman Graham. "Acrylic 36" x 36"” *Wisconsin Fine Artists*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Dec. 2016.

In these paintings, Graham feels that it’s a response to the natural world, changing in response to some complex awareness of the **unity** of life.

The yellow in *Acrylic 36" x 36"* appears to be glowing, normally when reflecting on the subject of life, bright yellow or white is associated with it.

In *Pastel 30" x 38"*, Graham attempts to reflect her personal impressions of living things or the parts of living things. Symbolically, this may suggest the painting is a celebration of living or life in general.

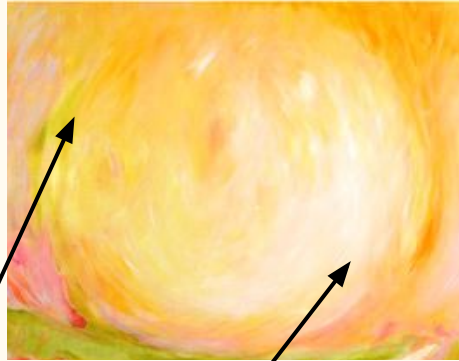


"Patricia Gilman Graham."Pastel 30" x 38"” *Wisconsin Fine Artists*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Dec. 2016.

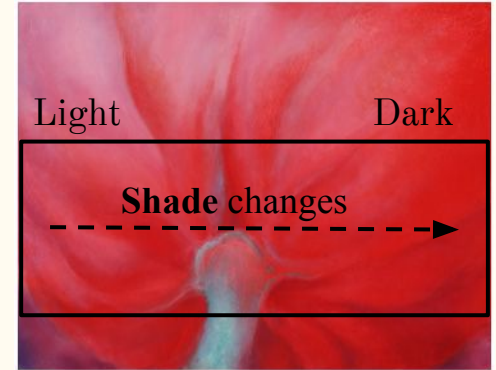
Analysis of Formal Qualities: “Acrylic 36" x 36”” and “Pastel 30" x 38””



Similar to O’Keeffe, Graham uses cool and warm **hues** and **movement** in her painting. The **hues** are well-blended, and the blending of the yellows look similar to the art movement of Color Field, which could be a possible inspiration for the piece.



As stated before, the brightness of the yellows appear as if something is glowing or beginning to form, which ties in with the creation of life and a fertilized egg.



The flower appears to be in full bloom, which could possibly symbolize what she meant by a celebration of life, for once a flower is in full bloom, all that’s left for it to do is die, completing its life cycle.

Evaluation of Cultural Significance: “Acrylic 36" x 36”” and “Pastel 30" x 38””

With Graham’s artworks, her cultural inspiration traces all the way back into her childhood, where she first became fascinated with nature. As a child, she remembers planting seeds and “kneeling in the earth; the wonder of that experience has been with me all my life. That a speck of a seed, given soil, water and light, could become a beautiful flower, was an event too marvelous to comprehend.” --Patricia Gilman Graham

This turning point in Graham’s life allowed her to express what she had wanted to show the world, that the marvel of nature and of life should be celebrated through her art. Graham use of nature in her paintings allow her to reflect her impressions of living things, which figuratively suggest the celebration of being.



"Patricia Gilman
Graham."Pastel
30" x 38””
*Wisconsin Fine
Artists.* N.p., n.d.
Web. 30 Dec.
2016.

"Patricia Gilman
Graham. “Acrylic
36" x 36””
*Wisconsin Fine
Artists.* N.p., n.d.
Web. 30 Dec. 2016.



Making Comparisons and Connections: “Acrylic 36" x 36”” and “Pastel 30" x 38””

“Acrylic 36" x 36””

- ❖ Mainly uses **shades** of yellow.
- ❖ Appears to have rough brushstrokes.
- ❖ Painting does not show clear image.
- ❖ Acrylic was the medium used in the artwork.
- ❖ Audience has no clear location on the painting to look at.

Both Artworks

- ❖ Use warm and cool **hues** in artwork.
- ❖ Use nature as the inspiration of the artwork.
- ❖ Organic **forms** used (differently, but still used).

“Pastel 30" x 38””

- ❖ Mainly uses **shades** of reds.
- ❖ Used soft, smooth brushstrokes.
- ❖ Painting shows that it is a magnified version of a flower.
- ❖ Pastel was the medium used in the artwork.
- ❖ Audience can quickly see that the painting is of a flower.

Connections of Artwork to Personal Art

The piece I created was inspired by both Georgia O’Keeffe and Patricia Gilman Graham. I wanted to **apply** the techniques both artists used in their work, onto mine. I also used nature in my piece as a base for inspiration. I painted a cropped sunset, similar to what O’Keeffe and Graham do with their pieces. I also used warm **hues** such as red, orange and yellow, also similar to both artists’ work. I applied similar brushstrokes in my painting, creating this sort of shadow in my piece and overlapping look.

Overall, what I wanted to show was the beauty in nature, for example a sunset, which was my main inspiration. I used smooth brushstrokes and watercolor to create an overlapping appearance, allowing me to easily make the shadowy, fuzzy effect that a normal sunset would give off.



Evening Sun, watercolor on canvas.

Personal Art vs. Georgia O'Keeffe: Colors and Shape



Georgia O'Keeffe,
*Grey Lines with
Black, Blue and
Yellow*. Oil on
canvas, 1923.

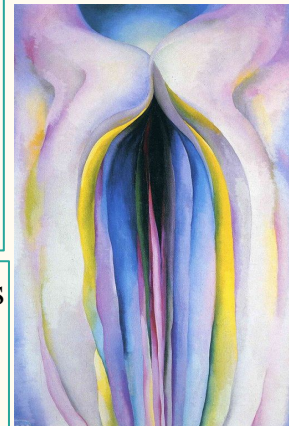
Evening Sun,
watercolor on
canvas.



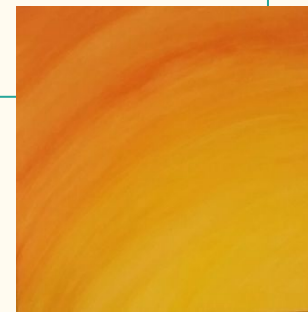
In these close-ups, the shadows created by the **colors** used in both pieces can be visible.

Differences between my painting and O'Keeffe's painting could clearly be seen by the **colors** used. In O'Keeffe's painting, she primarily uses cool **colors** such as violet, blue, and mixtures of white with violet. While some yellow is present, the amount of cool **colors** used overshadows the yellow. The organic shapes seen in her pieces are also different to my piece, since I have no **shape** or **form** to show.

My painting uses only warm **hues**, with different shades of red, orange and yellow. I incorporated the soft hues O'Keeffe uses in her piece into my own painting. This created a fuzzy, hazy effect in my painting, something I wanted to achieve to further show my main inspiration, which is the sun.



Georgia O'Keeffe,
*Grey Lines with
Black, Blue and
Yellow*. Oil on
canvas, 1923.



Personal Art vs. Patricia Gilman Graham: Colors



Patricia Gilman
Graham, *Acrylic*
36" x 36". Acrylic
on canvas.

Evening Sun,
watercolor on
canvas.

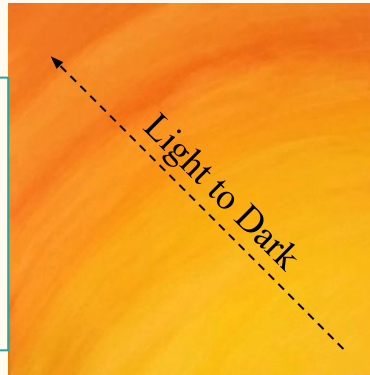


In Graham's painting, she shows both warm and cool **colors**. Graham's main **colors** are orange, yellow, pink, green, and blue. The way Graham organizes these colors are different compared to the way I organized mine. Her painting shows the use of orange next to blue, pink next to green and yellow being not necessarily in the center, but a bit above. This is an odd way of organizing the colors, since it leaves viewers to look at the first color that pops out at them.



Patricia Gilman Graham,
Acrylic 36" x 36". Acrylic
on canvas.

In my painting, I wanted order to be shown. I arranged the **colors** by having it start with yellow from the bottom right corner, with it becoming darker by using darker shades of yellow, then orange, and ultimately light red.



Personal Art vs. Georgia O’Keeffe: Brushstrokes of Artwork

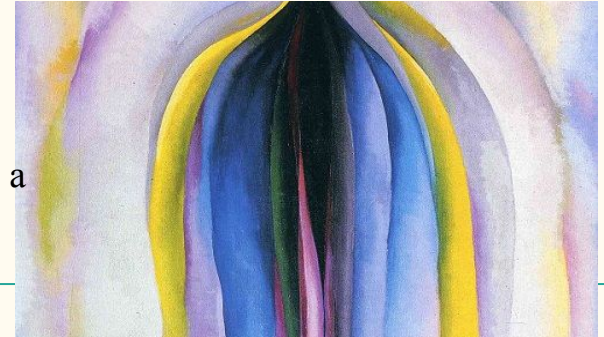


Georgia O’Keeffe, *Grey Lines with Black, Blue and Yellow*. Oil on canvas, 1923.

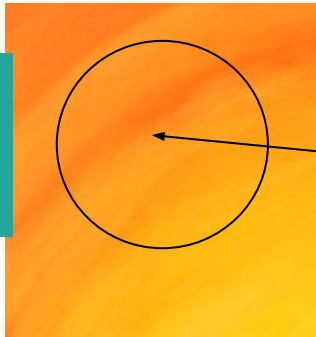
The blending is done well, this is caused by delicate, soft brushstrokes that O’Keeffe used.

Looking at O’Keeffe’s *Grey Lines with Black, Blue and Yellow* painting, her brushstrokes appear to be done with patience and time, while my brushstrokes appear soft but roughly done.

The softness of her brushstrokes can be seen throughout her piece, giving viewers a sense of peace.



Evening Sun, watercolor on canvas.



The inconsistent line marks show how the brushstrokes were done either quickly or roughly.

My brushstrokes **created** this fuzzy effect, making it look like smooth strokes were used. However, both soft and rough strokes were used.

Personal Art vs. Patricia Gilman Graham: Nature and Beauty



Patricia Gilman Graham, *Pastel*
30" x 38".

Evening Sun,
watercolor on
canvas.

Both Graham and I used nature in relation to the theme of celebrating life. In this painting, Graham uses a flower to show this theme, while I used a sunset. We both cropped the image to give viewers a closer look of the beauty present in nature, whether it be the detail, the **shadows** or the **colors** used that give off the effect of beauty.

The use of nature in both pieces are also clear signs that they relate to the theme. A bloomed flower shows the peak of life, since it is nearly complete, but still very much alive, while the setting of a sun reveals that the day is ending, like the cycle of life is coming to an end.

Making Comparisons and Connections: All Artworks

Personal Art

- ❖ Used watercolor paints to create hazy look.
- ❖ Used warm **colors** such as red, orange, and yellow.
- ❖ Used a combination of rough and smooth brushstrokes.
- ❖ Painting is somewhat structured (light to dark).
- ❖ Movement can be visible.
- ❖ Nature (sunset) as inspiration.



Georgia O'Keeffe

- ❖ Used oil to blend the colors well into each other.
- ❖ Used cool colors such as blue and violets.
- ❖ Used smooth, delicate brushstrokes.
- ❖ A kind of symmetry is present in the following pieces.
- ❖ Nature (landscape and flower)



Patricia Gilman Graham

- ❖ Acrylic created highlight in the pieces.
- ❖ Used combination of warm and cool colors.
- ❖ Used rough (*Acrylic 36" x 36"*) and smooth (*Pastel 30" x 38"*) brushstrokes.
- ❖ *Acrylic 36" x 36"* appears complex; the viewer's eyes scatter; *Pastel 30" x 38"* is simple.
- ❖ Nature (flowers)

