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PLATE 2 | ELISEO RODRIGUEZ (1915–2009). *Still Life–New Mexican Crucifix*, 1953.  
Oil on canvas, 33½ x 28 in. Vicki Rodriguez.

## Foreword and Acknowledgments



PLATE 3 | GEORGIA O'KEEFFE (1887–1986). *Yellow Cactus*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 30 x 42 in. Dallas Museum of Art, Texas. Patsy Lucy Griffith Collection, Bequest of Patsy Lucy Griffith. 1998.217. (O'Keeffe 675)

NEW MEXICO HAS CAPTIVATED THE IMAGINATION of many peoples for more than five centuries. The stunningly beautiful landscape of contrasts—from mesas covered with piñon to snow-clad mountain peaks—is rivaled only by the distinctive tricultural harmony of Hispanics, Native Americans and Anglos. This heritage was a key component of the drive for statehood, which was achieved in January 1912. New Mexico, America's fabled "Land of Enchantment," almost immediately sought to promote cultural tourism, and its national campaign to do so inspired numerous artists to visit the new state. Within a few years, influential magazines were hailing the Santa Fe-Taos art movement and thriving art colonies. Cultural divides quickly were merged.

One outstanding creative presence in American artistic and cultural history is Georgia O'Keeffe. Her name is among a handful that is immediately recognized by the general public. Her paintings are well known, either as originals in museums or as countless posters, and she has been the subject of numerous publications and exhibitions both in the United States and, increasingly, abroad. As an integral part of the American art scene since the 1910s, she has been viewed almost exclusively through the lens of twentieth-century modernism, notwithstanding her own attempts to distance herself from both scene and context. The refined sophistication and simplicity of her imagery engendered her popularity, as did the ongoing debates about her life, accomplishments and continuing legacies. Even in her earliest works, O'Keeffe was already a visionary who provided new ways to view our surroundings and to explore our inner selves.

O'Keeffe first traveled to New Mexico in the summer of 1917, when she and her sister spent several days in Santa Fe. Something captivated her imagination. The tremendous impact of that trip proved to be a source of inspiration throughout her lifetime. Not until the summer of 1929, when she was already recognized as a leading and very successful American artist, was she

finally able to return to paint. In the next decade she lived on Ghost Ranch, about eighteen miles north of Abiquiu, and by the mid-1940s she was focused in that lush village on the Chama River, a tributary of the Rio Grande. Those two homes became her sanctuary. A perceptive recent book by Barbara Buhler Lynes and Agapita Judy Lopez, whose family worked with Georgia O'Keeffe for several generations, shows the extent to which these houses became the artist's most stunning still life and self-portrait. Yet, O'Keeffe's New Mexico still-life compositions were neither the first nor the only ones inspired by that vast land.

To put it simply, O'Keeffe's temperament was acutely attuned to nature—simple realities inspired her veneration. While many of her works are landscapes, significant insights into her everyday experiences can be found in her portraits of the cherished objects that filled her surroundings. She clearly loved the Southwestern landscape, finding in it an ever-changing beauty and intimations of infinity. She treasured the quiet nobility of the region and the sense of timelessness it evoked. The inanimate objects with which she surrounded herself became a vital part of her vision in creating poignant self-portraits and in expressing her own sensations and emotions of New Mexico. From her earliest experiences there, she sought to convey some measure of the inexplicable forces she embraced in nature. Using flowers from her gardens, bones, river stones and adobe courtyard walls with their gates, doors and shadows, O'Keeffe dramatically refined those simple visual objects into something quite extraordinary.

Visitors to O'Keeffe's home in Abiquiu or to nearby Ghost Ranch are immediately struck by the remnants of what was once the grand still-life composition of her life. Archival images of both houses provide a glimpse onto her canvas. Incredible appliances that were rare even in the finest of urban homes immediately contrast with Mason jars for seasonal canning and simple