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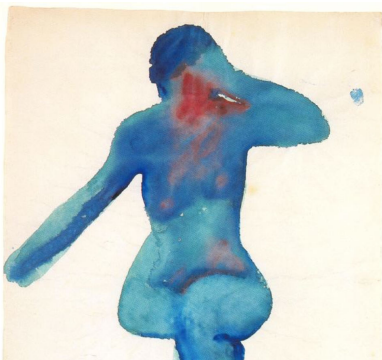
English 3

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### The Cosmic Essence of Art and Existence

In “Art Is a Different Kind of Cosmic Order,” Brian Greene, a theoretical physicist, analyzes the unique significance of art in understanding human existence. He proposes the importance of art for personal patterns of subjective experience. In other words, art is “...pathway toward a yet broader variety of truths that encompasses subjective experience” (Greene, “Art is a Different Kind”). Fascinated by the quality of art that has endured throughout evolution despite its unnecessary role in survival, Greene believes that art has prevailed because humans are drawn to patterns—colors, movements, or shapes. While he touches on the integral roles of Math and Science in seeking “external truths” in the external world, he disputes this by emphasizing art's integral part in human reality.

Georgia O’Keeffe’s ability to evoke emotions and engage viewers on a more spiritual level reflects Greene’s thesis. Her most common themes throughout her pieces focus on organic beauty and wonder, inviting the viewer to deeply appreciate every small detail. She believes that art can deepen our connection with our natural environment, often painting everyday objects and scenes and transforming them into something extraordinary (ChatGPT). This also connects to Green’s claim due to the versatility and conventional aspects of nature that are extremely significant aspects of the human experience.



O’Keeffe, Georgia. “Nude Series VIII”, 1917. Georgia O’Keeffe Museum <https://collections.okeeffemuseum.org/object/25/>. Accessed 09/27/2023

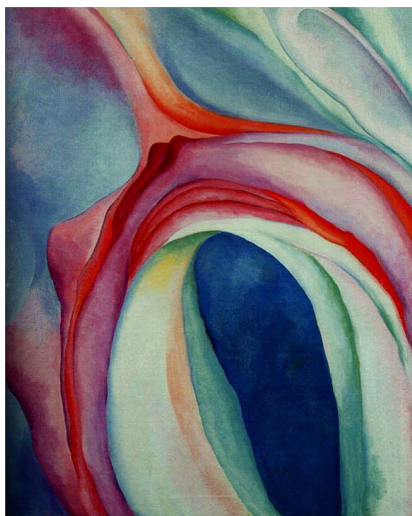
This iconic piece (Nude Series VIII), created by O'Keeffe in 1911, illustrates her unique approach to modernist art and her profound connection to nature and the female human form. She utilizes a limited color palette of mostly blue hues that contrast with the plain white backdrop. This encourages the viewer to focus more on the subject matter—the female figure. O'Keeffe also employs unconventional usage of forms and shapes. She displays careful attention to the natural contours and curves of a female body by simplifying the figure into a more abstract shape. She is able to emphasize its naturally flowing dimensions. By making it more abstract, it makes the piece more universal, reinforcing the idea that the female body is a powerful symbol of individuality and ordinariness. Another element that is present in this piece is texture. O'Keeffe brushwork is relatively seamless and precise, portraying a tangible quality in the portrayal of human skin. She creates a sense of depth and shading throughout the piece by utilizing variations in brushstrokes. She also alters the darkness in her shades of blue. This element of the painting makes it feel more natural, adding to the realism of the work and inviting the viewer to appreciate the human body as a real and tangible presence. Rhythm also plays an important role in this piece through the woman's ribs and elongated pose, through the use of color and shape. The rhythmic quality of this painting encourages the viewer to notice the interconnectedness of the various elements within the painting. Balance is another powerful element of the piece. You can see that the center-axis of the figure is evenly centered, which adds an aspect of balance to the overall feeling. This balance creates implications of harmony and equilibrium in viewers, accentuating the tranquility of the subject.



O'Keeffe, Georgia. "Ladder to the Moon", 1917. Georgia O'Keefe Museum <https://www.georgiakoeeffe.net/ladder-to-the-moon.jsp>. Accessed 09/27/2023

In 1958, O'Keeffe created one of her greatest pieces, *Ladder to the Moon*. The foreground of this painting shows a handmade wooden ladder suspended in a captivating turquoise sky. In the background, we can see

the inky black Pedernal Mountains, where she was once a resident in a narrow mesa in northern New Mexico. The mountains are also accompanied by a small, opalescent moon. Many people believe this work has religious connotations from the Pueblo culture. In their beliefs, the ladder symbolizes the strong link between the Pueblos and cosmic forces. The detail that the ladder is pointed up towards the sky may also represent the connection between nature on Earth and the cosmos. According to O'Keefe, "The images are all of transition: the ladder itself implies passage from one level to another; the moon is cut neatly in half by the bold slicing light, halfway between full and new; and the evening sky is in flux, still pale along the line of the horizon, shading into deep azure night at the top of the canvas." (O'Keefe). A bold aspect of this painting is the bright, captivating use of turquoise in the open sky. The element of space, where the color takes up a majority of the painting emphasizes the extreme power and vastness of the cosmos. You will notice that inside the rungs of the ladder, the color is slightly muted, a lighter shade than the rest. This bold turquoise also greatly enhances the contrast between the bright sky and the dark mountain range, placed at the bottom portion of the screen. The mountains provide perspective in the painting, balancing the land and sky within this painting. Another contrasting element is the ladder placed in the center of the painting, using very realistic colors and textures. It contributes to the asymmetrical balance of this piece, being slightly off-centered to the right. The texture used in this painting is smooth and has very realistic characteristics, utilizing shading and blending.



O'Keefe, Georgia. "Music, Pink and Blue No. 2", 1918. Whitney Museum of American Art <https://whitney.org/collection/works/7759>  
Accessed 10/02/2023

In O'Keefe's piece 'Music, Pink and Blue No. 2', she explores themes of connection between the visual and the aural, and organic harmonies in nature. This piece was created in 1918, during her earlier explorations of abstraction. The title of this piece shows her belief that art can express feelings that words cannot, similar to music. One of the most prominent

elements of art utilized by O’Keeffe is her unique use of lines. The lines are smooth, flowing, and organic, giving the artwork an element of fluidity and movement. The usage of color in this piece is significant, using a limited palette of pink and blue. The center of the piece is the color of aqua-tinted water, surrounded by a layer of pink and red tones—the colors bearing a relationship to blood and flesh. The use of these shapes is abstract and bold, contrasting the central shape and the surrounding background shapes, giving the piece depth and interest. She also utilizes space with the background which gives the painting a sense of dimensionality. There is also an important sense of movement in the background through the direction of the colors toward the top left corner, which makes the painting seem more alive and natural.

Georgia O’Keeffe’s artworks, including *Nude Series VIII*, *Ladder to the Moon*, and *Music, Pink and Blue No. 2*, provide compelling evidence for Greene’s thesis. Through her alluring use of color, symmetry, balance, and other elements of art and design, she is able to display the profound connection between the natural world and humanity’s experience. O’Keeffe’s ability to transform everyday subjects into extraordinary pieces underlines how art can deepen our connection with our natural surroundings. Her extreme attention to inherent detail invites viewers to appreciate the beauty and symbolism in ordinary life, reinforcing Green’s idea that art can display a broader range of truths, encompassing the unique aspects of our human existence. O’Keeffe’s art exemplifies the enduring significance of art in our story, transcending mere survival to reveal the cosmic essence of art and existence.

### **Works Cited**



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