

Flower Power—The ... Art ...

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Botanical Art

Long before the invention of the camera, there was a need to have images of plants

Carolus Linneaus and others developed a system for classifying plants based in part on the physical appearance of the plant (growth habit) and morphology (leaves, stem, flowers, etc structures)

So there was a need to have pictures which showed things in perfect proportion.

Note also that this was before photocopiers so the originals were precious because they were the only record.

Botanical Art

Images needed to be

- Detailed, accurate, leaving no detail out
- Particularly to be useful in science it needed to show the details that the systematicists consider relevant

Many of these were amazing works of art

if you try to do it, you might find it nearly impossible



Botanical Art

Note how the specific details are highlighted

This type of art is still valid and used today.

There is a society that serves professionals in this field.



Botanical Art

This is both art and sciences

Note that “perfection” is a key feature!

While “beauty” is not the objective, it is rare that you find one which is not beautiful.

So let's consider the history of this.

Antiquity

As man evolved, plants were a key part of the world: food, shelter,

initially: hunter-gatherer

As domestication of plants became relevant, drawing it was necessary to communicate which plants could be used for what

communication was complicated because nuances of the plants had to be communicated

clearly pictures were needed since preserving the plants was not possible.



Plant scratched on bone,
paleolithic
(from "The Art of Botanical Illustration
by Wilfried Blunt, 1994)

Example from ancient Egypt – Great Temple of Thutmose III at Karnak ... dating from the

fifteenth century B.C., and record a part of the spoils which the victorious Thutmose III brought back from his campaigns in Syria. An inscription states that they show “ all the plants that grow, all the

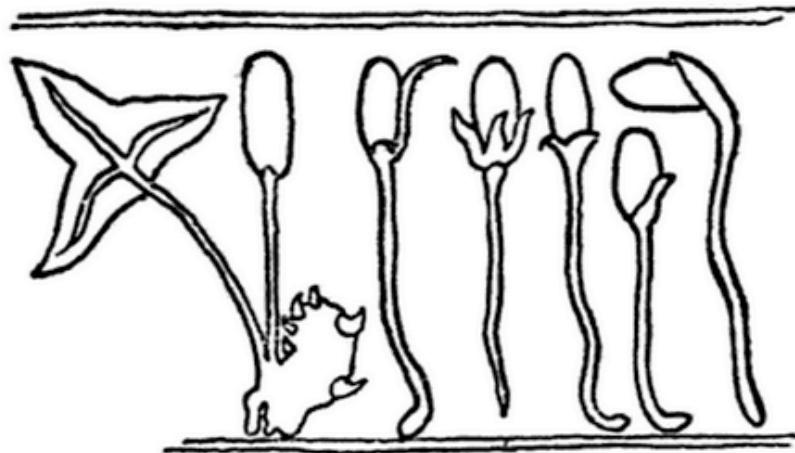


FIG. 2—*Dracunculus vulgaris* seedlings. Egyptian stone relief in the Great Temple of Thutmose III at Karnak, c. 1450 B.C.

275 plants are illustrated like this on the walls of the temple

goodly flowers that are in the Divine Land [i.e. the country north-east of Egypt] . . . His Majesty saith, ‘As I live, all these plants exist in very truth; there is not a line of falsehood among them. My Majesty hath wrought this in order to cause them to be before my father Ammon, in this great hall for ever and ever.’ ”

Syrian plants illustrated in stone in the Great Temple of Thutmose III at Karnak (circa 1450 BC)



Various purposes for having illustrations

Most folks could not read; illustrations were much more important

But with the written language it was possible to make exact copies of the words. Exact copies of the illustrations was more difficult (you needed a pro)

Reproduction

Note that before the printing press, copies were made by copying from an earlier copy.

So with copy after copy it was inevitable that inaccuracies would creep in.

In times before printed press:

Being able to collect plants for medicinal purposes depended on a high degree of realism in drawing.

For those obtaining plants from nature, being able to distinguish details was very important, sometimes to distinguish a poisonous plant from an edible one

Note that this was not a simple thing: the illustrator had to have a sample to draw.

Here is what happens if an illustrator does not have a sample to look at:

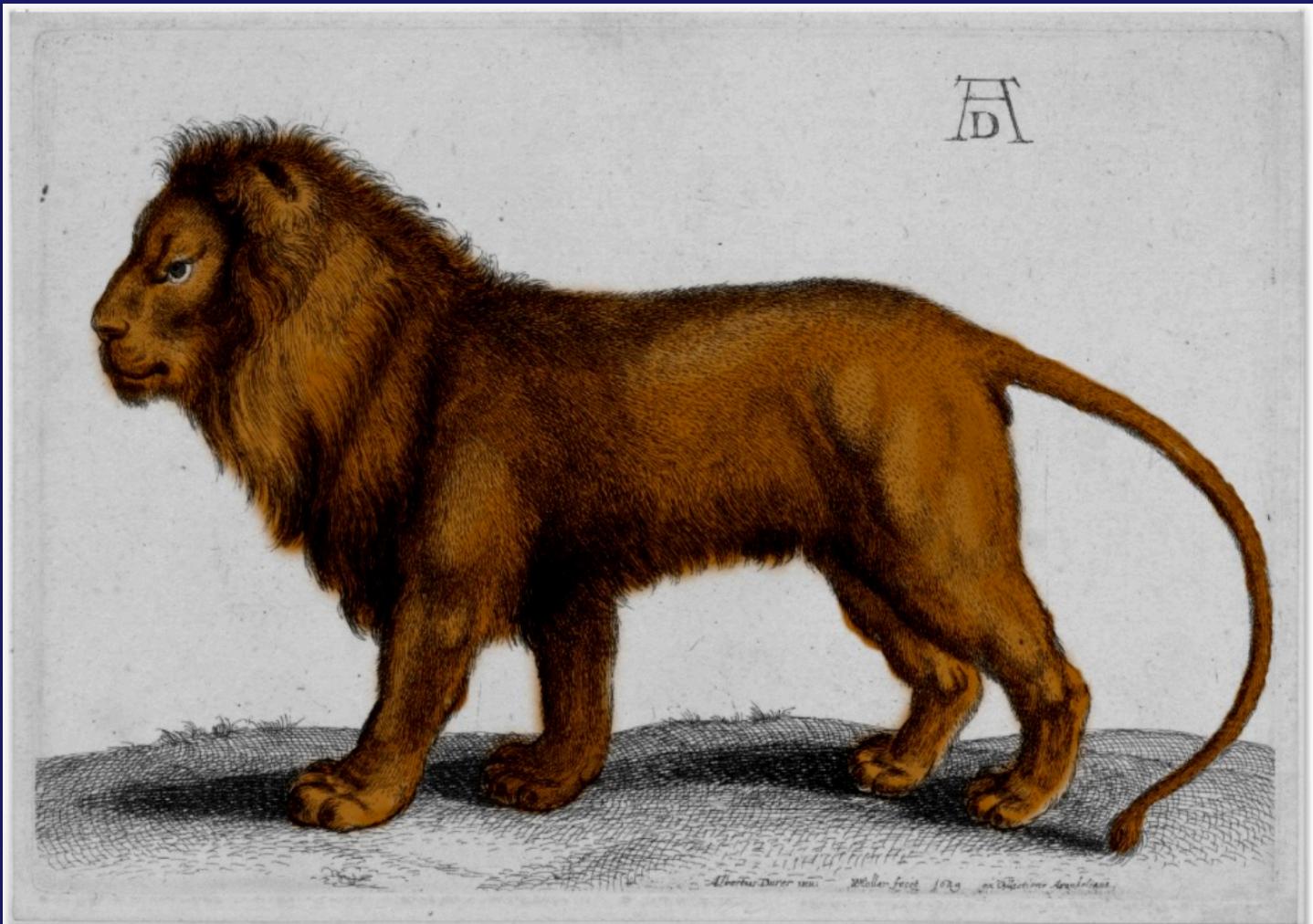
Consider Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528)

One of the greatest artists of his time in
Germany

He was a real pro; he knew how to draw very
accurately

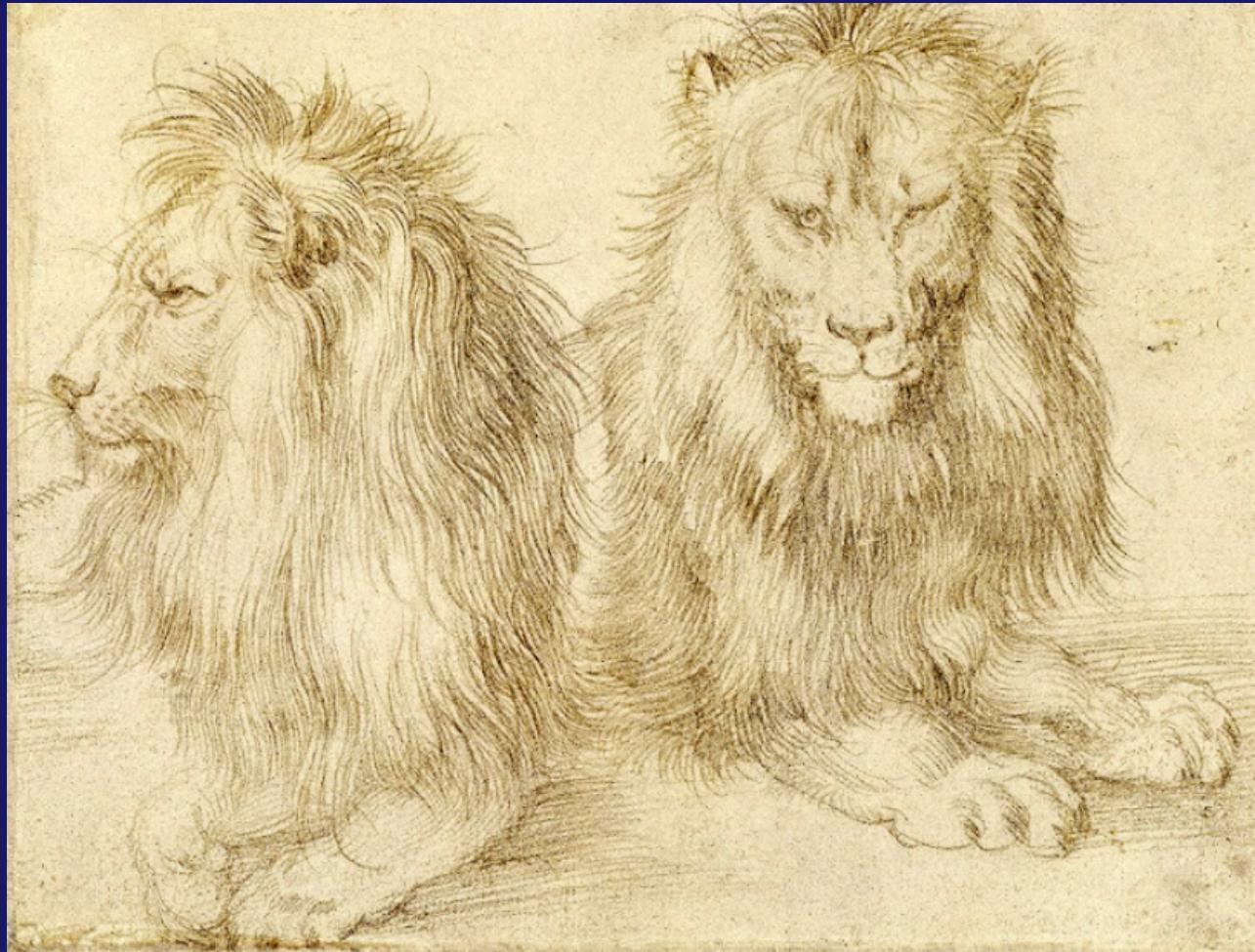
But let's look at an image that all of you know
exactly what it is supposed to look like.

Here is what happens if an illustrator does not have a sample – what is this animal?



Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528) had never seen a lion in real life and only knew that it looked like a big cat.

Here is what happens if an illustrator does not have a sample – what is this animal?



When he finally saw it in a zoo, he then drew it differently (not like a big kitty cat); but notice something?

And lest you think
he was only
illustrating animals:

He did this image of
Columbine

Take a close look at
the larger leaves.
What other plants
have leaf shapes
almost exactly like
that?





Poison Oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*)

Take a close look at
the larger leaves.
What other plants
have leaf shapes
almost exactly like
that?



Note that when the botanical art is more than art, that it needs to be **VERY** precise

Since many plants in nature have been around a long time and been the focus of illustrators....

Martagon Lily
From
De materia medica
Turkey, Istanbul,
mid 10th century
MS M.652 fol. 58v



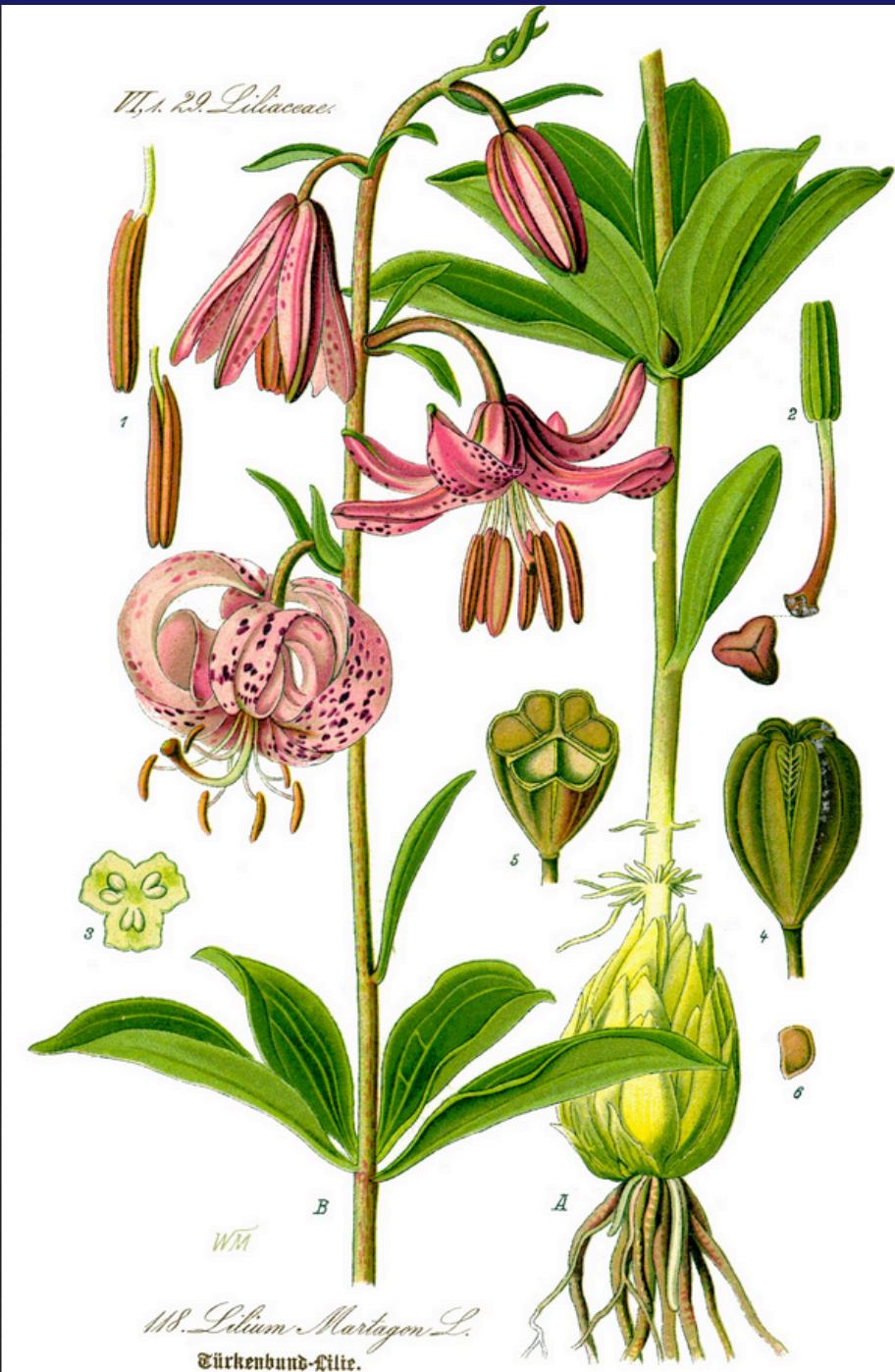
Since many plants in nature have been around a long time and been the focus of illustrators.

Martagon Lily
From
Venetian MS Herbal,
early 15th century
(British Museum)



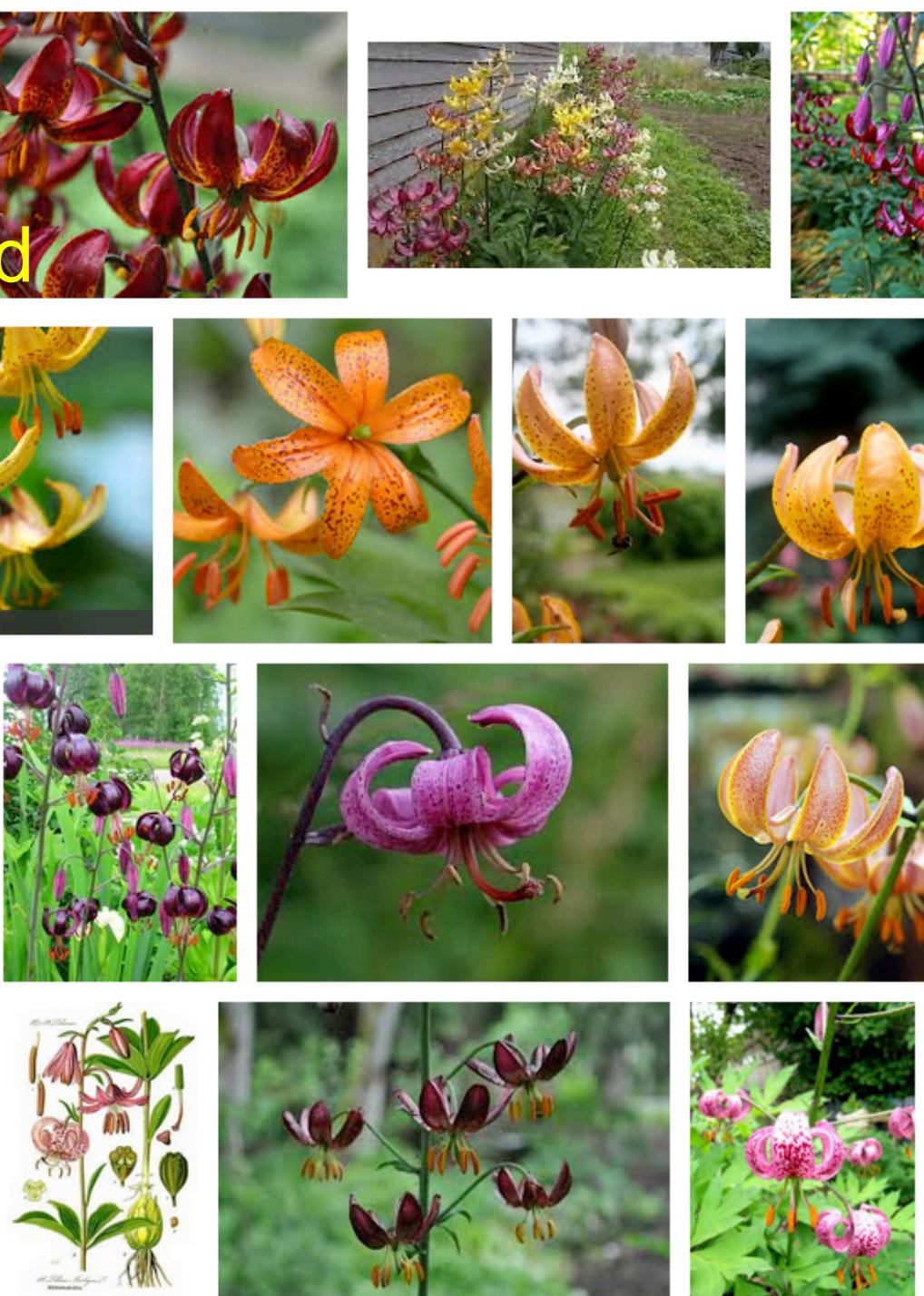
Since many plants in nature have been around a long time and been the focus of illustrators..

Martagon Lily by Otto Wilhelm Thomé (*Flora von Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz* 1885)



Since many plants in nature have been around a long time and been the focus of illustrators.

Martagon Lily photos
(Google images)



Note that in most of the images I have shown you the flowers were being diagrammed to specifically describe them, not to portray them in nature

This lack of naturalism changed after the 15th century

It is relevant that art itself changed with regard to how artists portrayed relative position of elements. So early on the size of a drawn element was in relation to its importance and not to create realism.

To create realism you need to draw with “perspective”

In the 14th and 15th century this became more mathematically structured allowing for a high degree of realism

Now look again at
Dürer's columbines

Note how you can tell
which leaves are in
front and which are
in the back; which
are closer to you
and which are
further back



During the Renaissance (16th Century)

There was a greater demand for realism in plant drawings

With specimen plants becoming more important, portraying them also became more important

Flower Confidential describes a period of time (17th century) when tulips were very expensive and became collector's items (Tulipmania).

If you are going to pay a lot of money for a prized tulip (tens of thousands of dollars in today's money for one bulb), you would certainly want an accurate image of it.



“Semper Augustus” was the most expensive tulip sold during Tulipmania

Age of Exploration – 16th through 18th century

Many expeditions were sent out by those who could afford it (Kings, Emperors, Explorer's clubs,...)

They wanted accounts of new lands and new organisms. The public wanted this information.

Clearly an image was always needed. So expeditions were sent with illustrators to document what they saw and to do so with great precision

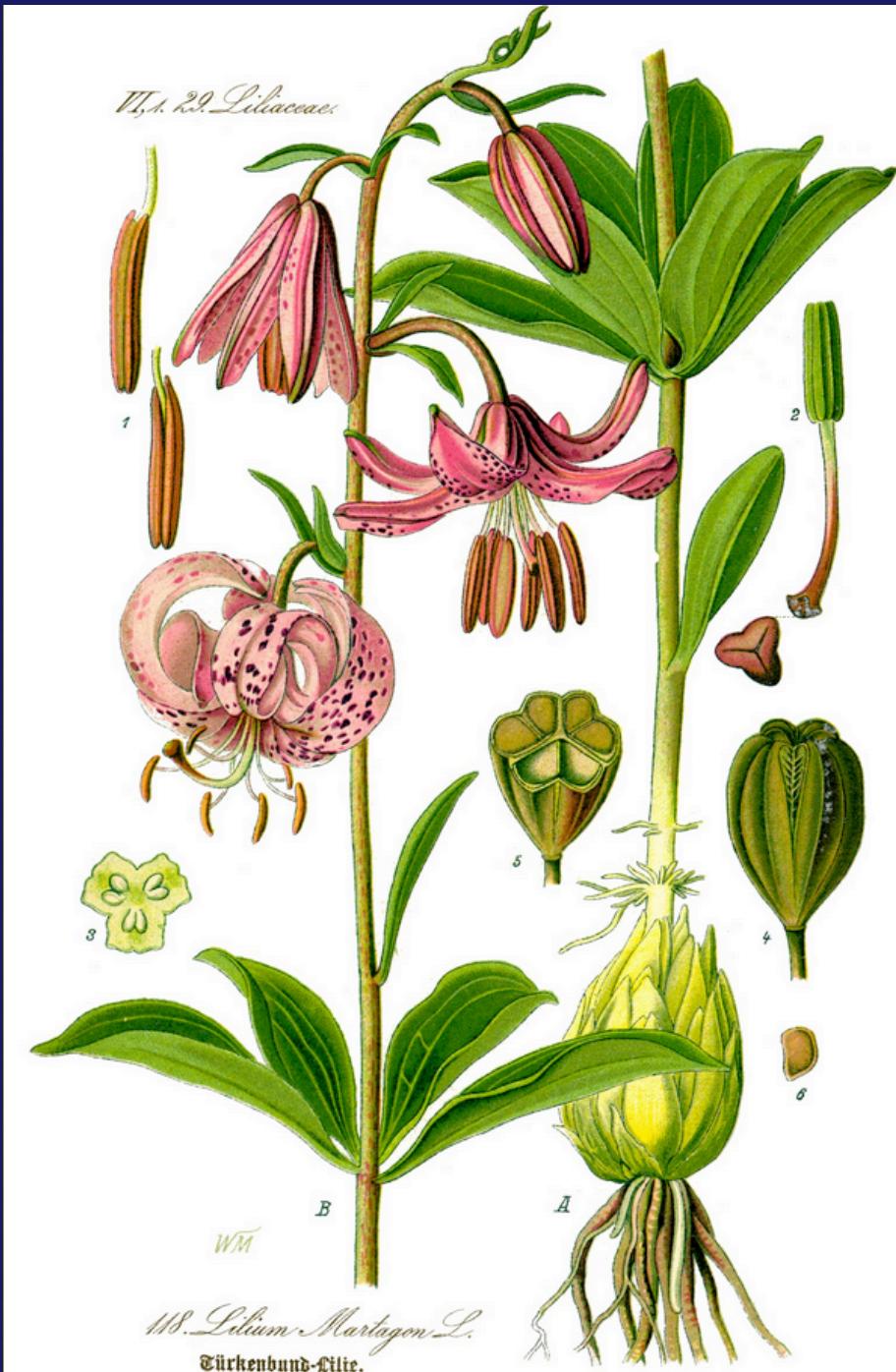
With ability to easily take pictures (cameras, film,...) the need for botanical art diminished. Mostly relegated to university collections; those with beauty also to museums.

Revival of Botanical Art

A modern revival is occurring.

In 1994 the American Society of Botanical Artists was formed (1300 members world wide).

When you look at botanical art you can see that it can do things which a photograph cannot do.



Let's talk briefly about Lilies

Easter Lily:





Lilium candidum
(Madonna Lily)

N. 278

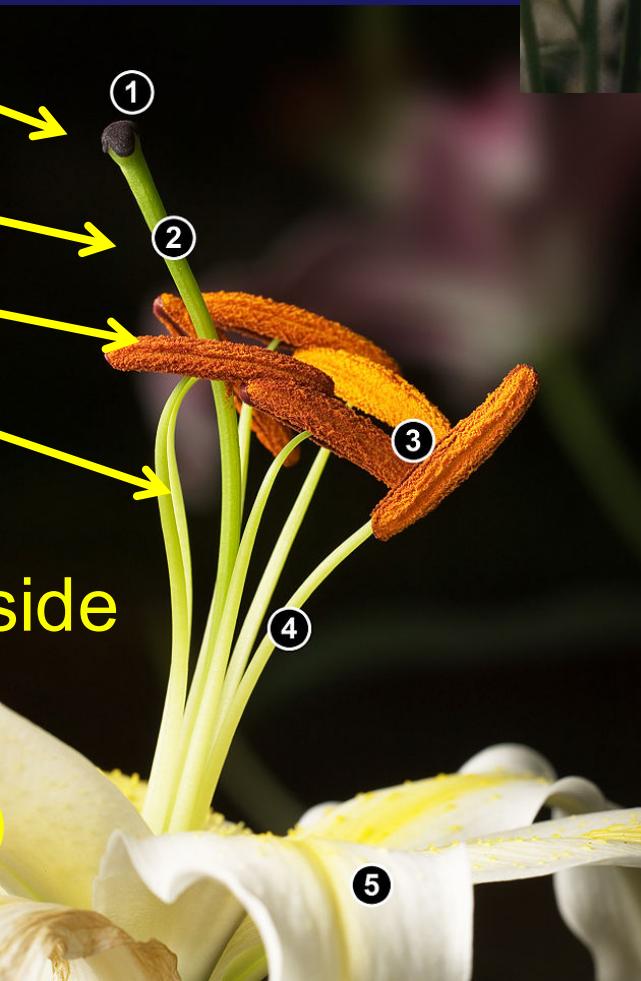


Pubd by W.Curtis M^t Geo. Crighton, Oct 1. 1794

Let's talk briefly about Lilies

There are several plants that are called
“Lily” (plural “Lilies”)

- true Lilies: genus=“Lilium”
- 1= Stigma
- 2=Style
- 3=Stamens
- 4=Filament
- 5=Tepals
(three petals inside
and three
Sepals outside)



Let's talk briefly about Lilies

There are several plants that are called
“Lily” (Plural “Lilies”)

- true Lilies: genus=“Lilium”

Longiflorum (Trumpet) Lily: **Easter lily**

Oriental lily: eg. **Stargazer lily**

Asiatic lily

...etc...

many “lilies” are not true Lilies:

Peruvian lily, water lily, fire lily, lily of the Nile

Amazon lily, leek lily, trout lily, kaffir lily,

lily of the valley, daylily, ginger lily, **calla lily**,

and others...



Calla lily (is not a true lily)



In landscape in Davis
Potted Calla:



Calla lily (is not a true lily)

i.e. not “Lilium”

Instead:

Zantedeschia aethiopica

Note what is missing:

6 tepals

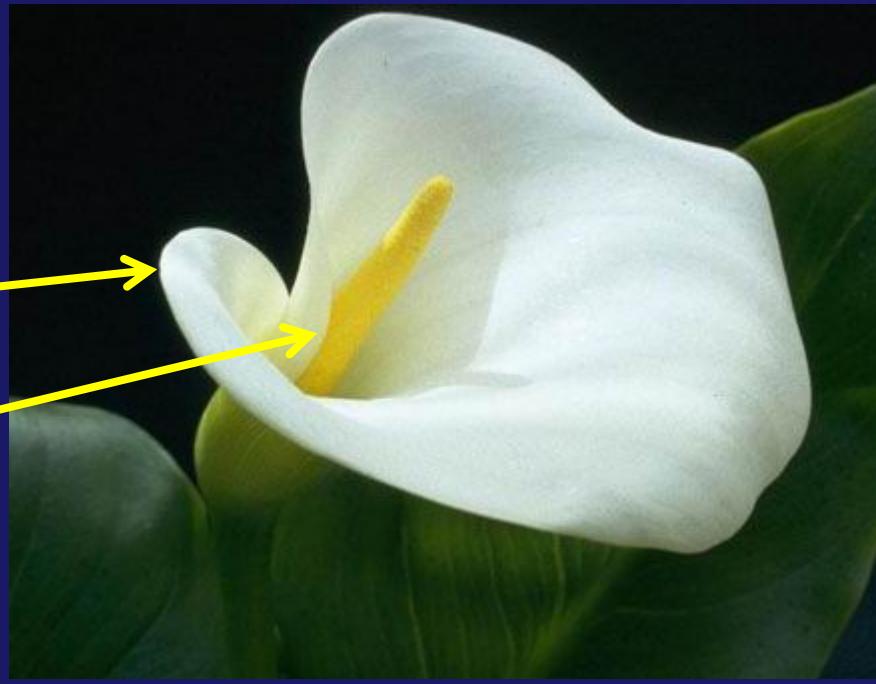
6 filaments

no bulb

Instead:

spathe (bract)

spadix (spike with lots of
tiny flowers)



One prominent artist Georgia O'Keeffe

1887 to 1986

Below: “Single Calla Lily (Red)”



Georgia O'Keeffe

Painted many subjects; also lots of flowers



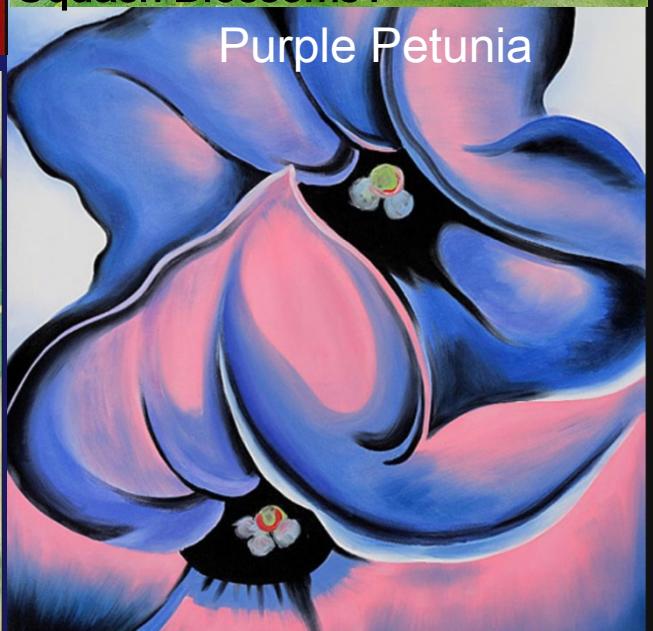
Red Poppy VI



Red Canna



Squash Blossoms I



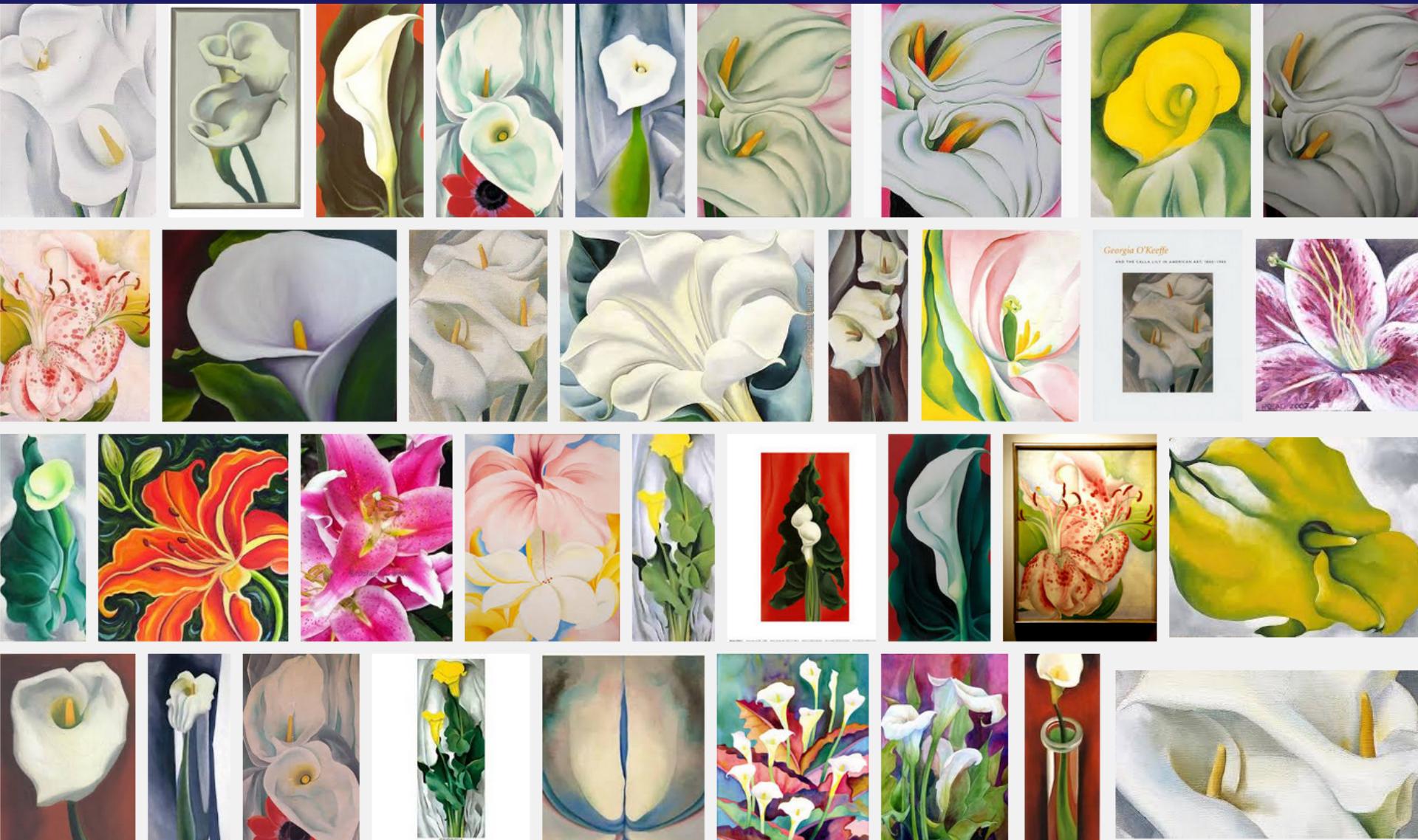
Purple Petunia



Jimson Weed 2

Flowers

Georgia O'Keeffe – many flower paintings (she painted Calla many times)



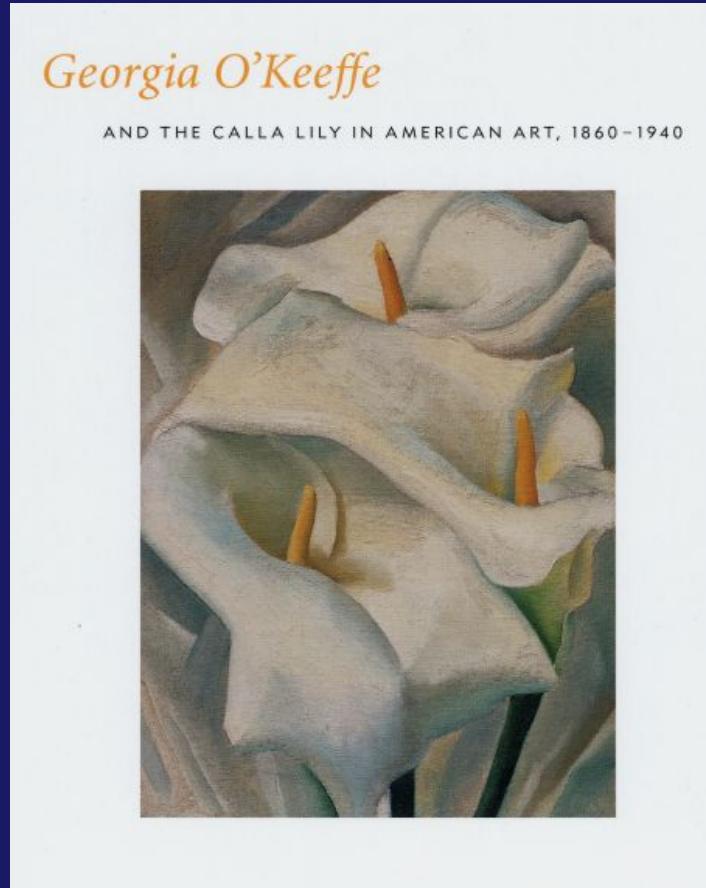
Georgia O'Keeffe

Book: Georgia O'Keeffe and the Calla Lily in American Art, 1860–1940
by Barbara Buhler Lynes; With essays by Charles C. Eldredge and James Moore

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the exotic South African calla lily was introduced in the United States, and it began to appear as a subject in American art.

The flower became even more popular with artists after Freud provided a sexual interpretation of its form that added new levels of meaning to depictions of it.

The calla lily soon became a recurring motif in works by important painters and photographers, particularly Georgia O'Keeffe, who **depicted the flower so many times and in such provocative ways, that by the early 1930s she became known as “the lady of the lilies.”**



Yellow Calla (1926) – by Georgia O'Keeffe



Location: Smithsonian American Art Museum

Flower Power Art Assignment

You must create some original art

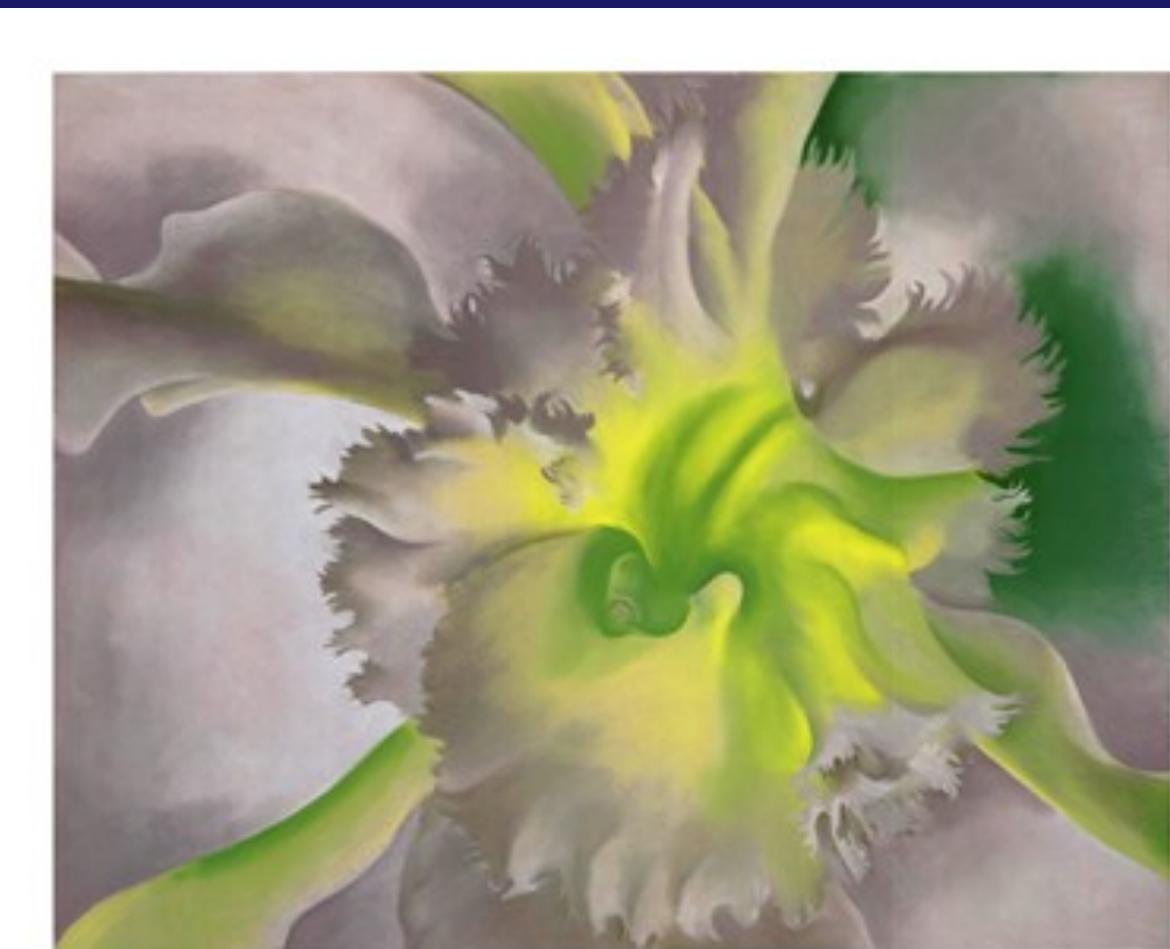
See Canvas Assignment tool for details

If Georgia O'Keeffe were in PLS006 today

Because her family name starts with “O” she selects
“Orchid”

So she might paint something like her painting

“An Orchid”:



Georgia O'Keeffe The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Flower Power Art Assignment

She would then spend a lot of time with her paints and brushes to create it in the specific format for the assignment. Perhaps so:



She did not just paint flowers...

Georgia O'Keeffe, 1915 – “Special No. 32” :



Christine Shackel

