EDWARD HOPPER

AN ANALYSIS OF HIS ART

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CHAPTER I

THE INTEGRITY OF EXPRESSION: THE HUMAN FACTOR IN ART

This study undertakes to investigate the various components of the work of one man, Edward Hopper. Art is not a branch of mathematics; it has no problems; it has mysteries. The investigation of the work of an artist is undertaken as a probing of these mysteries. Art emerges from the total experience of the human race, from life impulses of past times as well as from one's own insistent present. The ultimate results of such a study should be a revelation of the whole man and the environment which produced his style. How would it be possible to paint and feel no interest in other people, or by virtue of an ivory indifference to be detached from the life which they so copiously bring? The final stature of an artist must be measured by his resources and his insight more than by his exploration of a passing mood or style. He cannot be a blind imbecile, but rather a political being, constantly alive to heart rending, fiery or happy events, to which he responds in every way.[1] It is the response of the artist, tempered by the environment which produced him to the

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[1]Robb and Garrison, Art In The Western World, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), p. 786.

complexities of life of his time, which removes art from the realm of the mathematical or the scientifically explainable. It is this very human factor which elevates art into the mystical.

The simple techniques of painting--how to prepare a canvas, the mixing of pigments and the craft of picture making--are rather easily acquired. But no one can instruct the artist in what or how his subject should be interpreted. It has been written that the greatest artists have always transformed their subjects in one way or another. The local, the topical, the isolated character of things and persons is absorbed in a universal order imposed by a superior intuition.[2] This secret integrity of the unconscious was theorized by Vassily Kandinsky when he stated, "A work of art consists of two elements, the inner and the outer. The inner is the emotion in the soul of the artist; this emotion has the capacity to evoke a similar emotion in the observer." He continues by saying that if the physical relation between the immaterial (the artist's emotional response) and the material exists in the work, a bridge will result. This "bridge" is one from the painter to the observer. If this non-material link does not function the work is not art, but merely a craft or as he said, "The inner element, i.e., the emotion, must exist; otherwise the art is

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[2]Robb and Garrison, p. 727.

a sham. The inner element determines the form of the work of of art."[3] Although Kandinsky was, by academic classification, a non-objective expressionist his words transcend artistic style. Edward Hopper is stylistically far removed from this early twentieth century painter. However, the universality of Kandinsky's words become even more apparent because of this difference. The inner element of Hopper has, just as with the expressionists, determined the form of his art.

The unrobing of the significant chance of the artist's symbols coming from the unconscious and speaking to the observer's unconscious is perilous. A painting is an entity. A painting evokes response as a whole. This study undertakes to investigate the various components of the work of one man. It is possible to dissect a work of art in this manner. However it must be born in mind that it cannot be, in the final analysis, these material and non-material elements taken separately which make a painting. It is the personal, often even unconscious, use of these component parts--the unique combinations of them by the artist--which raises painting above academic versatility. Isolated, these individual elements lose much of their significance. Only is their interrelationships, each supporting

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[3]As quoted by Herbert Read, A Concise History of Modern Painting, (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, Inc., 1959), p. 171.

and emphasizing the others, does the creation take form. Forbes once said, "I cannot recollect any great painting that is great for any other reason that it is a great painting."[4] Watson's criteria can be the only final justification for a work of art.

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[4]As quoted by Ira Glackens, William Glackens and the Ashcan Group, (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1957), Introduction.

CHAPTER II

THE EXPRESSIVE MEANS OF EDWARD HOPPER

I. PERSONAL AIMS OF THE ARTIST

Painting involves much more than the technical mastery of painting skills. As was pointed out by Kandinsky the painting is first the inner consciousness of the artist. The ability to reorganize and project this inner experience onto canvas thus becomes the basis of real painting. The mastery of drawing and composing realistically is relatively simple compared to the problem of symbolizing the untranslatable idiom of sensuous stuff through the limits imposed by the media of the painter.

In all societies there exists a language of symbols, but the mere use of these symbols will not guarantee emotional response. Man is the measure of these symbols, which bear to him an intimate and undeniable connection with his humanity.[1] In a discussion of Medieval symbolism in the work of Jan Van Eyck it was said that they are largely unrecognized as symbols in our time. These symbols, which originally were specific, but relatively local and limited in significance, have now assumed universal value by having been shaped in color and

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[1]Weller Ember, "Symbols in Literature and Art," College Art Journal, XVI, (Fall, 1956), p. 54.

space by the hand of that artist.[2] The technical skills are necessary but it has always been the concern of an artist to endow this raw skill or knowledge with all that he, the painter, the political social being, totaled. Upon this the final success depends.

Edward Hopper demonstrates the genius of a man who, throughout his productive career, has had a highly personal and original response to his world and has recorded his impressions in a language that is both beautiful and meaningful.[3] Herein are the dual keys to Hopper's painting success. Charles Burchfield once said of Hopper's work, "Here is seen the summation of an artist who has seen his goal almost from the beginning, set his course accordingly and unerringly steered toward it veering neither right nor left."[4] Again, in 1950 he wrote in a monograph accompanying Hopper's retrospective exhibit that his art was a part of the interwoven fabric of his personal character and manner of living. "The simplicity of his work, its economy of means . . . all seems to stem directly from his almost ascetic makeup."[5] Elaborating on this

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[2]Robb and Garrison, Art In The Western World, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), p. 617.

[3]E. W. Watson, "Retrospective Exhibition at the Whitney," American Artist, XIV (April, 1950), 3.

[4]E. W. Watson, "Retrospective Exhibition at the Whitney."

[5]Charles Burchfield, "Hopper: Career of Silent Poetry: Retrospective at Whitney Museum," Art News, (March, 1950), 63.

point he continued by saying that he demands very little in so-called creature comforts; the most modest of living quarters seem sufficient to him.[6] His has been a life devoted to his art. "There seems something so inevitably consistent about everything connected with Hopper and his work: Even his physical makeup, his almost painful modesty about his art, his soft-spoken manner. Integrity is the word that instantly comes to mind in contemplating the man and his art."[7] This integrity of the man and his painting underlies all else that can be said of Hopper. The steadfastness of personal purpose and style throughout the past fifty years of "isms" in the world of art has been mute testimony to this integrity. Only a man such as he could paint, with honesty, in such a truly American manner--just as only a Flemish artist could speak the painting language found in a Brueghel painting. Yet, in both, the purely national aspect has been transcended by projection onto the

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[6]Hopper has lived in the same fourth floor walk-up on Washington Square, New York City, for forty-eight years. He and his wife, Josephine, who was also a Chase Art School student both have studios here. His is starkly bare. There is never evidence of more than one canvas--the one being worked on, in his white-walled studio ("Silent Witness," Time, LXVIII [December 24, 1956], 28). The Cape Cod Summer Home of Hopper was self-designed thirty years ago (Figure I). The austerity of this studio-home embody the stark simplicity of a painting by the artist (Robert Hatch, "Tip of Cape Cod," Horizon, II July, 1961 10). These living quarters both testify to Hopper's innate personal restive order; to his modest, unpretentious mode of life.

[7]E. W. Watson, "Retrospective Exhibition at the Whitney."

canvas of the totality of the artist. Each is honestly local, or national, but from the inner conscious both are also personal, original and human.

In the words of the artist, "My aim in painting has always been the most exacting transcription of my most intimate impressions of nature."[8] This credo might be one of banality for some but with Hopper the quality of his impressions of nature and the supremacy of his craftsmanship as a painter account for magnificent accomplishment. He has successfully isolated certain poignant aspects of contemporary scenes and made graphic commentary upon the life and environment of his time. Hopper is an artist who has always had something significant to say about life. What is equally important, he has said it in a language that is intelligible to his fellow men. His "exacting transcription" would be little but illustration were it not for the second and qualifing statement "of my most intimate impressions". These impressions are the result of long, lonely observations. Chance results play part in the work of this exacting artist.

Edward Hopper cannot be said to be a flag-waving nationalist. His "American Scene" style preceded, encompassed and

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[8]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1933), p. 17.

post date the movement of the same name. Alfred Barr once questioned the validity of nationalism in art and received the following statement from Hopper. "In general it can be said that a nation's art is greatest when it most reflects the character of its people; French art seems to prove this."[9] In a rare article, he wrote of his friend, Charles Burchfield, "After all, the main thing is the natural development of a personality; racial character takes care of itself to a great extent, if there is honesty behind it."[10] He could well have been describing himself. Hopper has never denied the Anglo-Saxon attributes which are so strongly planted in his character. He was born in the late nineteenth century in New York State. The Hopper family were merchants and of moderate, middle-class means.[11] Upon this simple foundation of a rather average American background he built an aesthetic which expressed them directly. He has turned the Puritan in him into a purist, turned moral rigours into stylistic precisions.[12] Hopper can

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[9]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper. Hopper continues by saying, "If an apprenticship to a master is necessary, it has been served. Any further relation of such a character can only mean humiliation to us. After all we are not French and never can be and any attempt to be so, is to deny our inheritance and to try to impose upon ourselves a character that can be nothing but a veneer upon the surface."

[10]Edward Hopper, "Charles Burchfield: American," Magazine of Art XIV (July, 1928), 8.

[11]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 16.

[12]Ibid.

properly be called an American painter in the sense that his work reflects the culture which produced him. His classic presentation prevents his work from being merely local or national in its appeal. Peyton Boswell, former editor of Art Digest, once said the bridge to international appreciation is the national bias by way of the subconscious. He said that to gain a world audience an artist must belong to his own peculiar time and place. He concluded by saying that "...more than being American, Hopper is--just Hopper, thoroughly and completely himself."[13]

Hopper presents his subjects without sentiment, propaganda or theatrics. He is the pure painter, interested in his material for its own sake, and in the exploration of his idea of form, color and space division.[14] In spite of restraint however one can read into his interpretations of houses and conceptions of New York life any human implication one wishes. Thomas Wolfe wrote in 1934 that "In other times, when painters tried to paint a scene of awful desolation, they chose the desert or a heath of barren rocks. But for a modern painter, the most desolate scene would be a street in almost any one of our great cities on a Sunday afternoon."[15] This quotation

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[13]Peyton Boswell, Jr., Modern American Painting, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1939), p. 145.

[14]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 16.

[15]Thomas Wolfe, "You Can't Go Home Again," quoted in Art In America, XXXXVII (Summer, 1959), p. 34.

would seem most appropriate for a Hopper painting of the city, (Figures 13 and 15). He handles color, space and form as only a master can, and these result in an interesting scene, but the suggestions and implications of the settings and the life that has made them raise his canvases have commonplace illustration. Evidence of human activity, struggle and emotion exist even in his empty houses.[16] Hopper has created drama in his work, drama subtly inherent by not being manifested (Figure 27). This ability became a hallmark of Hopper's truly individual expression.

The austerity of a Hopper canvas speaks of his hatred of the purely decorative. Notorious for his views about decorative painting, Hopper has simplified the already rudimentarily simple. Du Bois, a life-long friend of Hopper's recounts that it took him years to bring himself to paint a cloud in the sky.[17] He disdains affectation; his paintings are humble, never pretentious. Carried beyond painting Du Bois further relates that talking to the artist was much the same. Hopper considered much conversation to be made up of utterances not worth the physical bother required to produce. "He will

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[16]Ernest Brace, "Edward Hopper," Magazine of Art, XXX (May, 1937), 277.

[17]Guy Pene Du Bois, Edward Hopper, (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1931), p. 9.

never himself, in conversation, bother to fill in awkward moments..."[18] Nevertheless he uses his words well, as in a Hopper painting, which by a method of stark simplification and utmost clarity of statement produces an evocation of a mood and an essence that is sharp and true.[19] His avoidance of the superficial in paint as well as in word might well be paralleled in the terse titles that have been chosen for his paintings.

The progression of Edward Hopper from his earliest work to his mature style has evidenced no flounderings or deviations, no experimenting with working methods.[20] He has painted surely and steadily. His self-imposed standards have been high and have resulted in few failures.[21] Like Matisse, he has rigorously excluded from exhibition all but his fully recognized

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[18]Guy Pene Du Bois, Edward Hopper.

[19]Sheldon Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, (New York: The Viking Press, 1941), p. 575.

[20]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, (New York: The Museum Of Modern Art, 1933), p. 16.

[21]His attitude toward his profession in general was indicated by his reply to the question of whether it had been a pleasure to paint what he considered his most successful works. "Well, they're a pleasure in a sense, and yet they're all hard work to me. That's why I can't say it's pure pleasure. There's so much technical concern involved." As quoted by John Morse, "Edward Hopper Interviewed," Art In America, XXXXVIII (Spring, 1960), 63.

work.[22] Hopper has produced an average of from two to four canvases a year. He has estimated it takes about a month to finish one of his oils.[23] His known output as of 1948, was eighty oils and two hundred and fifteen watercolors.[24] Hopper's successful career, which has been a sharp and steady ascendant path, has been based upon this modest, numerically slight, accomplishment.

II. THE REALITY IN HOPPER'S WORK

Much of the time the terminology used in the classification of painting is purely arbitrary. Hopper has been hailed as modern, praised by the "purer" critics (for formal simplicity), and by the "social" critics for laying bare the sordidness of the American scene. All of these claims contain a certain validity.[25] In his career, however, there has been no change in conviction or direction. From his earliest student painting to his latest canvas the only change has been an increasing elimination of detail in his stoical realism and a continued search for a greater candor and intensity of presentation. He paints with the intensified reality achieved

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[22]Alfred M. Frankfurter, "Spotlight On: Hopper," Art News, XXXXVI (January, 1948), 25.

[23]"Silent Witness," Time, LXVIII (December 24, 1956), 28.

[24]Judith Kaye Reed, "The Enduring Realism of Edward Hopper," Art Digest, XXII (January 15, 1948), 12.

[25]Suzanne Burrey, "Edward Hopper: The Emptying Spaces," Art Digest, XXIX (April 1, 1955), 9.

by the German verists. It was not camera truth but a concise pictorial record of aspect and spirit. Like the verists, Hopper conveys a feeling of the subject that comes over the beholder.[26] The bent of honesty so strong in Hopper was apparent as early as 1929 when it was written that "...he appears to prefer truth to beauty, with the result that the beauty he attains is all the more powerful and full of meaning."[27] If they are not temples of the human spirit his architectural scenes do look very much like what they are, expressions of human striving in all its disarray. The man-made urliness he chose to paint was too dour to be fashionable in the first quarter of this century. Twenty-three years passed between his first public showing and his "discovery" by the art world. Only with the depression did his harsh, lonely and hard-bitten view become understandable to millions.[28]

The American scene so identified with Hopper emerges as the raw, uneasy world that Americans have built on this land.[29] In speaking of his native land he has chosen to paint the most ordinary things about the United States, sights that esthetés might turn away from and everyone else would take for

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[26]Sheldon Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, p. 576.

[27]Virgil Barker, "Exhibition, Rehn Galleries," Arts, XV February, 1929), 114.

[28]"Gold For Gold," Time, LXV (May, 1955), 72.

[29]"Silent Witness," p.39.

granted. With these meager materials he has made immutable and unforgettable essays. Eyewitnessing America has become not only his one subject, but his obsession as well. This keen sight of the common-man-made has proved appropriate for expression of human strife in all its solitude and chaos, as well as hinting of its spasms of nobility. The balance of blemish and blessing tend to produce that vibrancy of inner life that animates the most solitary of his houses. Hopper's leisure time is self-inforced and involuntary. He attends movies, wanders the streets on foot alone or tours the highways with his wife. Hopper has said,

> I look all the time for something that suggests something to me. I think about it. Just to paint a representation or a design is not hard, but to express a thought in painting is. Thought is fluid. What you put on canvas is concrete, and it tends to direct the thought. The more you put on canvas, the more you lose control of the thought.[30]

In the same vein, regarding the task of painting involved before the actual canvas contact he has been quoted as saying, "It takes a long time for an idea to strike. Then I have to think about it for a long time." He concluded by saying, "I don't start a painting until I have it all worked out in my mind. I'm all right when I get to the easel."[31] These statements yield a great insight to Hopper's genius of

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[30]"Silent Witness," 38.

[31]Suzanne Burrey, "Edward Hopper: The Emptying Spaces," 8.

seeing the transcending verities intuitively and expressing them so powerfully.

A man of unassailable reserve, solemn and conservative, Edward Hopper once said, "What lives in a painting is the personality of the painter."[32] His attitude of mind manifests itself in his use of subject matter. His iconography consists in main of a lone figure, most frequently a girl, or at most three or four people; houses, mostly from his beloved New England; Coastal scenes and the streets of New York. Hopper buildings often evidence more human life than his people. Signs of human use and havitation exist in scenes even when people do not. Indeed the people he portrays on canvas stare into space or are viewed from the back. They are parts of the whole scene, vital but only parts. Hopper's own reserve might be said to be carried into his paintings in this manner. He alluded to this therory of avoiding intruding into lives of his people in discussing his American realist predecessors. Although he feels closest to Eakins, he said "Eakins had much more humanity than I do."[33] A man of few words, Hopper in art is like Sinclair Lewis in letters; he, too, conjures up the thought of Main Street, but unlike the author, the artist

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[32]"Silent Witness," 37.

[33]Ibid.

portrays American Landscape and architecture without satire.[34] Hopper, in his personal style of simplification presents the complex of the city with its steel, stone, concrete, glass and asphalt--the myriad forms of buildings and objects in a detached, silent yet crystal-clear manner. The phenomena of rooms and figures seen through windows are but parts of the huge organism of the city. They are seen without intimacy or penetrating characterization.

In his Painting In America, Richardson classified Hopper with the solitary individuals of painting like Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins and Albert Ryder. He continued by saying that these men were all so concerned with finding a personal interpretation of life that they did not fit easily into the current of contenporary painting.[35] In his slightly abstracted romantic realism Hopper has achieved this highly personal and yet convincing "true" reality of things of his world.[36] The essence of his work can be said to lie in the capacity to make the distinction between the transitory and the significant in his creations. This essence has placed Hopper's

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[34]"Modern Museum Holds Hopper Exhibition," Art Digest, VIII (November 1, 1933), 19.

[35]E. P. Richardson, Painting In America, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1956), 10.

[36]"Winner of the National Institute of Arts and Letter's Gold Medal for Painting," Art News, LIV (May, 1955), 8.

work above illustration and above the common conception of realism. Although a certain amount of assimilation has occurred from contact with various other artists and his own formal education, "The only real influence I've ever had, was myself."[37]

III. SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION

A master of pictorial drama, Hopper seldon comments upon his paintings. He feels the artist must communicate via his chosen media. The success of the artist rests in the product of his labors and not words of explanation or justification. In the typical terse language of Hopper, "If you could say it in words, there'd be no reason to paint."[38]

In the drama of a Hopper work, space has often been used as the chief actor. In Room by the Sea (Figure 27) there are suggested the actions of persons.[39] In this form of understated realism the observer is motivated to add to the content of the picture. Space again produces an incisive mood in Approach to the City (Figure 14). Hopper said of

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[37]"Silent Witness."

[38]Ibid., p. 38.

[39]As quoted by Suzanne Burrey, "Edward Hopper: The Emptying Spaces," 10.

this painting:

> "I've always been interested in approaching a big city by train, and I can't exactly describe the sensations. But they're entirely human and perhaps have nothing to do with esthetics. There is a certain fear and anxiety, and a great visual interest in the things that one sees coming into a great city."[40]

Hopper has used his sound technical skills of simplification and his individual vision to produce in the beholder a certain feeling of tension and anticipation.

More in keeping with his reluctance to verbalization upon his painting was the following incident reported by a writer for Time. Mr. and Mrs. Hopper were being interviewed upon the occasion of his receiving the Gold Medal for Painting from The National Institute of Arts and Letters. Cape Cod Morning (Figure 26) was being discussed. Mrs. Hopper posed for the figure in this painting as she has for many of Hopper's pictures (Figure 16). She, who has always been far more talkative than her husband, said, "It's a woman looking out to see if the weather's good enough to hang out the wash." To which he replied, "Did I say that?" And then rumbled, "Your making it Norman Rockwell. From my point of view she's just looking out the window, just looking out the window."[41]

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[40]John Morse, "Edward Hopper Interviewed," Art In America, XXXXVIII (Spring, 1960), 63.

[41]"Gold For Gold," Time, LXV (May 30, 1955), 72.

Even so, Hopper does not paint what he sees, rather he sees what he looks for. Remarkable for his distaste for the conventionally picturesque, on a trip to the Southwest he onced searched for days before he finally, happily, found something to paint--an abandoned locomotive in New Mexico.[42] The absence of the sky scraper from paintings created by this man, so intrigued by New York, is another example of the remarkable indifference to all except what he chooses to see.[43]

Despite the muteness of the artist regarding the objects as such in his pictures, a study of his work indicates that objects are not included for pure recognition alone, or as matter of fact records. The window, for example, has occurred repeatedly in Hoppers work and is often referred to in reviews of his work. They look out on a changing world, or they stare like the people in other canvases, forgotten people absentmindedly gazing into space or looking upon loneliness (Figures 5, 15, and 16). Ernest Brace wrote they are invariably suggestive of intimate living.[44]

His buildings are often symbolic in their relationship to man. In Manhattan Bridge Loop (Figure 13) Hopper has

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[42]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 14.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ernest Brace, "Edward Hopper," Magazine of Art, XXX (May, 1937), 275.

caught the feeling and emphasized the harsh, bleak, dreary nature of a section of New York City. In the elimination of detail and abstraction of the significant character of the scene, the monotony of man-made structures, it extends endlessly beyond the limits of the canvas. As in so many of his paintings, the buildings dominate their maker and the one figure is almost lost in the shadows at the left of the picture.[45] The prevailing mood of loneliness in all his paintings speak eloquently of the feeling of "loneliness in a crowd" which has become a twentieth century characteristic of city life. His architectural remains of another age are symbolic of the constructions of an unloved past, to echo in the barren present.[46]

The omission of people where they would be expected to appear has possibilities of symbolic implication. Such interpretations carried to extremes become hazardous. In a Hopper painting one's own rejected thoughts are recognized. They come back to one with a certain alienated majesty. In the final analysis, it is the ability of the painter to put into his work his own complete self, or his inner consciousness, which in turn stirs a highly personal response in the beholder; this ranks Edward Hopper as a successful painter.

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[45]Milton W. Brown, "Early Realism of Hopper and Burchfield," College Art Journal, VII (1947), 4.

[46]Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF STYLISTIC TRAITS

I. THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Slow-growing as an oak, Edward Hopper spent years of honest effort steadily working toward the only true reward in art. He shunned compormise and all the "ism" byways, with their superficial rewards to arrive, eventually, at a self-appointed goal. The summation of these goals was written by the artist for a publication which accompanied his Retrospective Show of 1933:

> I have tried to present my sensations in what is the most congenial and impressive form possible to me. The technical obstacles of painting perhaps dictate this form. It derives also from limitations of personality. Of such may be the simplifications that I have attempted.
>
> I find, in working, always the disturbing intrusion of elements not a part of my most interested vision, and the inevitable obliteration and replacement of this vision by the work itself as it proceeds.
>
> I believe that the great painter...have attempted to force this unwilling medium of paint and canvas into a record of their emotions. I find any digression from this large aim leads me to boredom.[1]

Through the skillful use of light, color, and the application of paint in smooth almost imperceptibly painted

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[1]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper (New York: The Museum Of Modern Art, 1933), p. 17.

planes, coupled with abstract simplification of his subject matter, Hopper overcame the technical obstacles of painting. His mastery in recording his personality and emotions has been referred to; its intangibility makes it more difficult to analyze than the physical means by which it was attained. Nonetheless, what has made Hopper's paintings durable in content is their transcendent representation of temporal objects. They are the expression of his thoughts and feelings about places, things, and man.[2] He is vain for drastic mutations of fashion, his world is fixed and timeless.[3] Hopper's success in reaching his stated goals is recognized over and over again in critical reviews of his work. His consistency in ideal and aim from earliest gropings to established style, wrote Lewison, show no evidence of trends.[4] In another review he is called a stubborn soul, staunch lone wolf holding steadfast to his private visions, untouched by foreign influence. And in the same article, "His subject

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[2]John Morse, "Edward Hopper Interviewed," Art In America, XXXXVIII (Spring, 1960), 62.

[3]James Thrall Soby and Dorothy C. Soby, Romantic Painting In America, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1943), p. 38.

[4]Florence Lewison, "Edward Hopper Retrospective Show," Design, LI (April, 1950), 24.

matter always life...meaty, direct and intimate..."[5] His superb handling of media, matery of composition and projection of personality into his work form an invariable trilogy whenever his work is mentioned. This subject matter he has presented with uncompromising integrity throughout his career.

Edward Hopper was born on July 22, 1882, in Nyack, New York. His parents were of Northern European ancestry (English and Dutch), and moderately well-off--enough to send him to a private day school prior to public high school. Hopper recalls a boyish enthusiasm for the Nyack shipyards and further remembers spending many Saturdays there. The predilection for the familiar in subject matter might even be said to begin here. Hopper drew. His first drawings were Nyack scenes and the shipyards he knew so well. His parents never objected to his choice of art for a career although they did feel the commercial field would offer him a sounder future. At the age of seventeen he was sent to a commercial illustration school in New York City.[6]

In 1900, Edward Hopper had lived in New York for one year. During this year he realized that a life as a

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[5]Jacob Getlar Smith, "Edward Hopper," American Artist, XX (January, 1956), 25.

[6]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 9.

commercial illustrator was futile for him. Consequently he entered the New York School of Art, better known as the Chase School, where he studied under Robert Henri, Kenneth Hayes Miller and William M. Chase.[7] During the five years spent at the Chase School, most of his work was done under the guidance of Henri. Commenting on his teacher fifty years later Hopper said, "He was a good teacher. He taught broadly. He dealt not just with the meticulous things of painting but related painting to life."[8] Hopper himself feels that Henri's influence on him, as on others, was intellectual rather than formal.[9] Henri was one of the original Revolutionary Black Gang, as The Eight was often called. He believed in the Ash Can School's credo that painting must be from everyday life, be of the common man.[10] Above all else, Henri advised his pupils to "Go to the life about you for your subject material."[11]

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[7]"Carnegie Traces Hopper's Rise to Fame," Art Digest, XI (April 1, 1937), 14.

[8]As quoted by Suzanne Burrey, "Edward Hopper: The Emptying Spaces," Art Digest, XXIX (April 1, 1955), 19.

[9]Parker Tyler, "Hopper/Pollock," Art News (Annual), XXVI (1957), 89.

[10]Peyton Boswell, Jr., Modern American Painting, (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1939), p. 55.

[11]"Carnegie Traces Hopper's Rise to Fame," 14.

It would seem such guidance was ready-made for a person of Hopper's temperament, judging by his mature works, yet during these years as a student his interest was principally in figure drawing.[12]

In the first years after leaving the Chase School, although the city streets appeared indirectly, Hopper's work consisted mostly of amusing watercolor caricatures done in a impressionistic manner.[13] Other students of these years were to heed Henri's advice and find early success. Hopper's art career was surprisingly obscured for almost twenty years.[14]

In 1908 Hopper exhibited in The First Independent Show along with fellow students George Bellows, Glenn Coleman, Rockwell Kent and his life-long friend and advocate, Guy Pene Du Bois. Unlike the others he sold no painting. It was to be five more years before he sold his first canvas and eventually discouragement from lack of acceptance was to cause him to abandon painting in oil completely for a decade.

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[12]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 19.

[13]Ibid.

[14]"Paintings Before 1915 at Rehn Galleries," Art News, XXXIX (Februaryl, 1941), 13.

Like so many painters of the pre-World War I years Hopper traveled to Europe for further study (1906-07).[15] In 1909 he spent the summer in Paris and the following year returned for another summer and that time he visited Spain as well. Barr compares Hopper to Bruegel in student days. Both went to the art capital of the world but their mature work shows almost no vestige of influence.[16] Fauvism was in full blast and cubism was taking form at this time, but they had no effect on this man so unusually impervious to outside influences.[17] The blonde color and concern for light of the impressionists is noticeable in work from these Paris years (Figure 2). "The light was different from anything I had known, the shadows were luminous--more reflected light. Even under bridges there was a certain luminosity. I've always been interested in light."[18]

The bold brushwork of these paintings was characteristic of the Chase School which was, as Hopper said, a "...facile version of the Impressionists' revision of the European classical tradition." Indeed, he observed of his teacher,

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[15]"Paintings Before 1915 at Rehn Galleries."

[16]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 12.

[17]Lloyd Goodrich, The Penguin Modern Painters, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Great Britian: Penguin Books, Limited, 1949), p. 5.

[18]"Silent Witness," Time, LXVIII (December 24, 1956), 37.

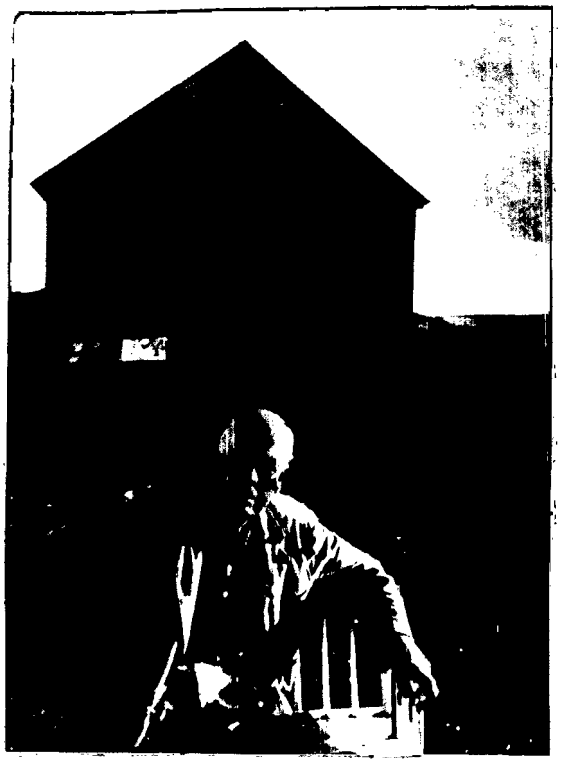

FIGURE 1

PORTRAIT

"Henri painted more in the broad, brushy manner of Hals and nineteenth century Munich derivations of Hals..."[19] More important to his style of later years was a noticeable un-impressionistic interest in architecture; massive forms.[20] These Paris street scenes recorded the solid simplicity, the absorption with light and feeling for architecture that were to constitute the basis of his style. Characteristically, Hopper forsook the Bohemian life and lived quietly with a middle-class, French family. When not painting, he read extensively in French literature, a language in which he is fluent.[21] The whole of his European experience was best summarized by the artist when he said, "I worked by myself in the streets,...painting everything in a high key for nearly a year." He then added as an afterthought, "It was probably not a strong, lasting influence, after all. Other than to lighten tones for me. Henri's students painted very dark."[22] Hopper's return to the United States was spiritual as well as physical.

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[19]Parker Tyler, "Hopper/Pollock," 87.

[20]Lloyd Goodrich, The Penguin Modern Painters, p. 5.

[21]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 10.

[22]As quoted by Lloyd Goodrich, The Penguin Modern Painters, p. 9.

FIGURE 2

LE PONT DES ARTS

II. THE BASIC ELEMENTS EMERGE

Italian Quarter, Gloucester, painted in 1912, is a significant painting in the development of a style. There is a looseness in window treatment and shadows that was to be replaced by sharper more geometric handling in later canvases (Figure 3). But compared to the Paris work, the whole is handled more exactly and with austerity. The emergence of a style of expression did not, of course, appear full grown in one painting. Elements (for instance his figure style) of his mature statments can be seen even in his student work, or very early watercolors. However, in this 1912 work all of the basic elements to be used by Hopper in later years appear. Refinement and technical perfection of these factors made his unique, mature expressive means.

The International Exhibition of Modern Art, which has come to be known as the Armory Show, perhaps did more to make Americans conscious of twentieth century art than any other single event. For Hopper, who exhibited in it, this show of 1913 resulted in his first sale. However, The Sailboat, which he sold, did not establish his reputation. In the clamor over the show in general, Hopper's work was not otherwise noted. Much of the avante garde painting of that show has become dated or sunk into oblivion, but not Hopper.

The year 1913 has no special significance in reviewing his work. He is as much 1960 as 1913.[23]

In retrospect, it can be seen that important advances were made by Hopper in his style. The Gothic houses appeared for the first time in Queensborough Bridge of that year.[24] Long horizontal rows of houses interested him this year of painting, too.

In Corner Saloon he exploited a tendency to let the brush stroke stand for digital statements of objects such as faces, dresses, or the magazines on a newsstand.[25] Even so, in it are evident, however haltingly stated, the qualities which, while they have developed and grown richer through the years, are the main characteristics of his oils today (Figure 4).[26] Another source marks 1913 as the year he abandoned impressionistic techniques for smoothly painted planes of somber color. Again, Corner Saloon illustrates this change in technique. "From here on his way of seeing

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[23]Charles Burchfield, "Hopper: Career of Silent Poetry; Retrospective at Whitney Museum," Art News, XXXXIX (March, 1950), 16.

[24]"Paintings Before 1915 at Rehn Galleries," 13.

[25]Parker Tyler, "Hopper/Pollock," 88.

[26]Burchfield, op. cit., 15.

FIGURE 3

ITALIAN QUARTER

and painting, little changed in essentials has grown keener, more vivid and confident."[27]

Hopper's paintings lacked both the gusto of paintings by The Eight and the technical brilliance of Bellows and Kent which made the latter acceptable to the conservatives. Goodrich wrote that the American art world was controlled by the academicians, who controlled the big exhibitions, the dealers, and the big prizes. Although he sent regularly to the National Academy and other conservative shows, Hopper was not accepted. "Bellows became one of the youngest artists ever elected to the National Academy...Hopper couldn't even pass juries."[28]

III. MATURITY OF STATEMENT

The ten years which followed the Armory Show were years of withdrawal. By being cut off from the art world it is possible that Hopper was protected from the ravages of compromise with public taste. In any event in these years he reached his own painting maturity.

During these years he turned, from practical necessity, to commercial illustration. Of these years Hopper relates

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[27]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 13.

[28]Lloyd Goodrich, The Penguin Modern Painters, p. 5.

FIGURE 4

CORNER SALOON

"Sometimes I'd walk around the block a couple of times before I'd go in, wanting the job for the money and at the same time hoping to hell I wouldn't get the lousy thing."[29] Even during this period he reserved time for his own work; his wife recalls that, "He didn't hire out more than three days a week."[30]

In 1915 Hopper had studied etching under the direction of Martin Lewis.[31] About 1919, searching for a means of expression in a different medium he turned to etching. "At last he produced some etchings that had a wholly new quality, the quality of himself."[32] This quality of himself became the essential element of his mature painting. In Eastside Interior (Figure 7) and Evening Wind (Figure 5) the uncompromising realism, absolute simplicity of statement and sense of mood appear for the first time. The world emerged as stark and naked in these black and white prints as in his later oils. There is little glamour, little of the picturesque (Figure 6).[33] The close of this decade in his life

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[29]As quoted in "Silent Witness," 37.

[30]Josephine Hopper, as quoted in "Gold Medal For Hopper," American Artist, XIX (June, 1955), 85.

[31]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 19.

[32]"Silent Witness."

[33]Childe Reece, "Edward Hopper's Etchings," Magazine of Art, XXXI (April, 1938), 227.

FIGURE 5

THE EVENING WIND

FIGURE 6

A LANDSCAPE

marked the end of many years of struggle, years of struggle toward the goal of self-expression.

In 1923 Eastside Interior won both the Bryan prize at the Institute of Printmakers exhibition in Los Angeles and the Logan Prize at the Chicago Society of Etchers Exhibition. Edward Hopper was forty years old. He was thirty-seven before he began to express himself in prints but his recognition in this field was swift. His prints were soon included in great collections--The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, to enumerate but a few. In 1933 the Museum of Modern Art honored Hopper with a retrospective show. It is interesting to note that he was the third American artist honored by a one-man show and the first to which the Museum of Modern Art devoted a separate room for etchings in a show.[34]

Following his success as a printmaker earlier that year, in the summer of 1923 Hopper went to a dealer, Frank K. M. Rehn, with some of his water colors. Although Hopper was still scarcely known, Rehn was immediately enthusiastic. Guy Pene Du Bois and other friends had encouraged him and through them Hopper had held two one-man shows at the Whitney

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34"Modern Museum Holds Hopper Exhibition," Art Digest, VIII (November 1, 1933), 19.

Studio Club, one in 1919 and another in 1922. Neither had met with marked success. His one-man Rehn Gallery Show (1924) was a complete reversal. The show resulted in a sell-out. The Rehn Galleries in New York still serve as Mr. Hopper's exclusive dealer.[35]

With this encouragement Hopper ceased his commercial illustration activities and returned to oils. He was invited to send paintings to Philadelphia and Chicago exhibitions and articles appeared about him in professional periodicals and newspaper art critics' columns. He was championed by critics--especially Forbes Watson of The Arts.[36] For one who waited so long for recognition, Hopper's fame came quickly, and time has proved, surely. "Within three years he was acknowledged to be one of the foremost American painters."[37]

IV. ASCETIC VIEWS

Hopper's paintings clearly reflect the long solitary wanderings of the artist. He has become a poet of man's loneliness-of his solitary existence in a world frequently not of his own making. He has presented the bewildering

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[35]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 11.

[36]Ibid. [37]Ibid.

complexity of twentieth century life with uncompromising harshness. For a person concerned with man's way, wrote J. G. Smith, the human element is peculiarly missing from painting that naturally calls for its inclusion.[38] He continued by saying that a disturbing feeling of abandonment and complete despair is produced by the missing pulse of life. Hopper's trademark has become his scrupulous avoidance of superficial charm.[39] His terse, often unpretty statements, seem to say, "If you can't stomach my kind of plain speech, go to the sentimentalists with their cute pinks and blues, maudlin tenderness, and decorative pretentiousness."[40] He presents searchingly, not the specific aspect of a single object or place, but the ideal image, or which other similar scenes are but variations. Each scene has been stripped bare to its soul and is more real than an actual photograph of a similar place could be.[41] Hopper must be considered a creative realist.

Critics have said Hopper lacks sentiment but one writer defended him by saying these critics are fooled. A fervency

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[38]Jacob Getlar Smith, "Edward Hopper," 25.

[39]Charles Burchfield, "Hopper: Career of Silent Poetry; Retrospective at Whitney Museum," 17.

[40]Jacob Getlar Smith, "Edward Hopper."

[41]Parker Tyler, "Hopper/Pollock," 90.

FIGURE 7

EASTSIDE

FIGURE 8

APARTMENT HOUSE

lies hidden under a thick coat of austerity. The middle class he portrays is drab.[42] Certainly he emphasizes the sternness of life. His view of the world has the severity of the ascetic. His view of life might be called that presented by a detached spectator. Hopper has somehow managed to take a particular moment, a split-second almost to make time stand still, and to give that moment an enduring, universal significance.[43] A canvas by Hopper sums up a mutually exclusive togetherness, in which all things are at once as communicative and as incommunicative as people in a subway car.[44] In presenting the shallowness of unanchored living Hopper denotes a natural, for him, respect for privacy. There appears a sympathy for his characters, pity and compassion for the lonely men and women who sit and stare in his paintings. However, a respect for man's dignity is too apparent to permit exaggerated emotionalism.[45] This reluctance to look too deeply is but a blunt, biting report on modern life. The barrenness of certain phases of contemporary life has been conveyed as symbolically impenetrable by Hopper.

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[42]Jacob Getlar Smith, "Edward Hopper," 23.

[43]Charles Burchfield, "Hopper: Career of Silent Poetry; Retrospective at Whitney Museum."

[44]Parker Tyler, "Hopper/Pollock."

[45]Jacob Getlar Smith, "Edward Hopper," 25.

FIGURE 9

HOUSE BY RAILROAD

FIGURE 10

SKYLIGHTS

The disconcerting penetration of modern American life has been presented with subject matter as persistent in path as his style. Hopper has done outstanding landscapes. He also paints the coastal scenes near his summer home (Figure 17 and 19). However, it has been the commonplace scenes of town and city, of subjects apparently too drab for normal interest for which the artist has become renowned. John Sloan painted the back streets, George Bellows the leering mob and Reginald Marsh caricatured Bowery people, but no one has portrayed New York with the severe and ungarnished power of Hopper.[46] The city for Hopper is not a place where children play in the streets or women gossip.[47] The city for Hopper is where one rents a room for the night (Figure 16), eats a lonely meal, or wanders lost and alone (Figure 13). He often presents a brooding, lonely moment in the life of a human being, a late straggler having coffee (Figure 21), an usherette in a virtually deserted theatre (Figure 18), or a glimpse caught from a passing El (Figure 14). New York to him has been the intensity of the thousands of lives pressing close to each other, all oblivious to the revelations of the undrawn blinds. To him, these spell New York more clearly

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[46]"Edward Hopper," Life, XXVIII (April 17, 1950), 103.

[47]Milton W. Brown, "Early Realism of Hopper and Burchfield," College Art Journal, VII (1947), 5.

FIGURE 11

DRUG STORE

FIGURE 12

TWO ON THE AISLE

than the soaring spires of skyscrapers. Strangely, this very human aspect of the city is achieved very often without the human as such.

Edward Hopper's canvas people exist as a part of the whole setting and are individually nondescript. They are incidents, not essentials. Guy Pene Du Bois said his paintings were "A search of harmony or peace--a noiseless architectural world whose solid beauty of line and mass is unblemished, unspoilt by the impertinent presence of so much sloppier,...people."[48] This latter view of mass and lineal beauty appeared in Two On The Aisle in which the repetition of the curvilineal elements of stage, box, box partitions, swaths of draperies and other areas of the canvas establish a solid, yet flowing beauty. The people in the picture of this scene from a theatre seem almost to intrude upon the beauty of the painting (Figure 12).

In the architecture portrayed by Hopper there can be seen a portrait of America, the America of unremitting ugliness, of discordant styles where each man has built to suit himself without regard to his neighbor.[49] Hopper buildings are, however, buildings which man has built and in which his

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[48]Guy Pene Du Bois, "American Paintings of Edward Hopper," Creative Art, VIII (March, 1931), 189.

[49]Lloyd Goodrich, The Penguin Modern Painters, p. 10.

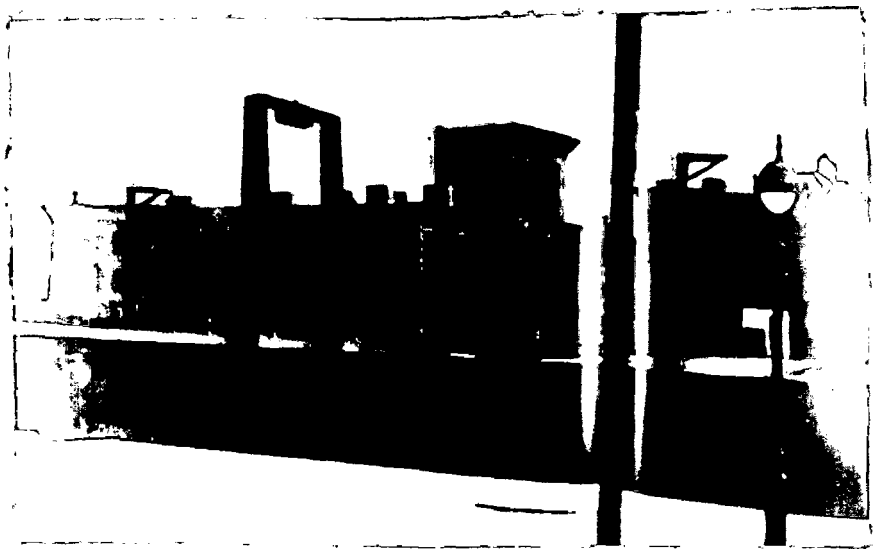

FIGURE 13

MANHATTEN BRIDGE

FIGURE 14

NIGHT WINDOWS

life is embodied.[50] He has caught the peculiar melancholy of architectural pretentiousness that is no longer fashionable. Through his selective vision and elimination of detail, he has turned these commonplace structures into beauty. Pseudo-Gothic and late U. S. Grant architecture have been presented, it would seem, not with cynicism but with delight. An early example of this type of canvas is House by the Railroad, painted in 1929 (Figure 9). In 1950, Hopper's architectural portrayals received the following comment in a review of his retrospective show: "His impression of the city is an ugly, yet hauntingly beautiful complex of flat-roofed buildings with ornate cornices and blank, even rows of windows..."[52]

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[50]E. P. Richardson, Painting In America, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1956), p. 394.

[51]This canvas was purchased by The Museum of Modern Art for its initial collection, and first shown on November 7, 1929 ("House by the Railroad," Art Digest, XXVI November 1, 1951 , 36).

[52]"Edward Hopper."

CHAPTER IV

TECHNICAL MEANS

I. PAINTING PROCESS

Edward Hopper's first show at the old Whitney Studio Club was in 1919. In 1954 the institution, by that time called the Whitney Museum of American Art, dedicated their new building. On that occasion Mr. Hopper was interviewed on television. In reply to the question concerning his technical method of painting Hopper revealed the following information:

> I have a very simple method of painting. It's to paint directly on the canvas without any funny business, as it were. I use almost pure turpentine to start with, adding oil as I go along until the medium becomes pure oil. I use as little oil as I possible can, and that's my method. It's very simple.[1]

This "very simple" technique has become an important element in the expressive means of his mature style. Hopper has disavowed any interest in decoration or beauty in itself. Beautiful painting or trick brushwork would, to him, result in a frivolous intrusion upon a profound thought. Hopper's brushwork, from his student days to the present, became in-

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[1]John Morse, "Edward Hopper Interviewed," Art In America, XXXXVIII (Spring, 1960), 61.

creasingly modest. It became so unobstrusive as to be scarcely noticeable at all in his mature works.

II. COLOR USAGE

In color, Hopper takes no liberties with nature in his uncompromising reality. The decorative or emotional expressive function of color have little place in a Hopper.[2] To the dark palette of the Chase School he soon added the bright hues of the French Impressionists. He has painted with the full palette throughout most of his career. His color is strong and full-blooded although it lacks nuances.[3] Smith called his color arid, rasping and raw.[4] All these adjective fit within the overall mood of a work by Hopper.

III. CHIAROSCURO

Very little of the effect of a Hopper painting is lost when it is reproduced in black and white (Figure 20 and 21). Hopper's steadfast patterns of sharp chiaroscuro are especially evident in black and white photographs. His original

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[2]Lloyd Goodrich, The Penguin Modern Painters, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Great Britian: Penguin Books, Limited, 1949), p. 12.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Milton W. Brown, "Early Realism of Hopper and Burchfield," College Art Journal, VII (1947), 5.

treatment of light was impressionistic (Figure 2).[5] His interest in the varying phenomena of diffusion of light or the beauty of color was replaced by interest in light clearly focused. This latter has been used to heighten his reality. One might say he paints with light as much as with color. The natural function of the electric light at night has been handled with excellence (Figures 11, 14, 18 and 20). Like Vermeer, he has caught three-dimensional form through the play of light. Hopper's rendering of weather and the time of day through this means is expert (Figures 9, 18, 25, and 26).[6]

Hopper creates a simple sensuous pleasure in the intensity of the painted sunlight falling on brilliant white walls in Lighthouse of Two Lights (Figure 17). Cold, hard illumination has been used to create reality more concentrated, more intense. Deep shadows make his rooms more intimate, his night streets more mysterious (Figures 5, 7, and 11). He has used light to evoke an atmosphere of isolation, remoteness and loneliness. The use of light has grown steadily with Hopper's development. It is never literal or photographic. It has become the most powerful and personal of Hopper's expressive technical means.

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[5]Parker Tyler, "Edward Hopper: Alienation by Light," Magazine of Art, XXXXI (December, 1948), 293.

[6]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1933), p. 13.

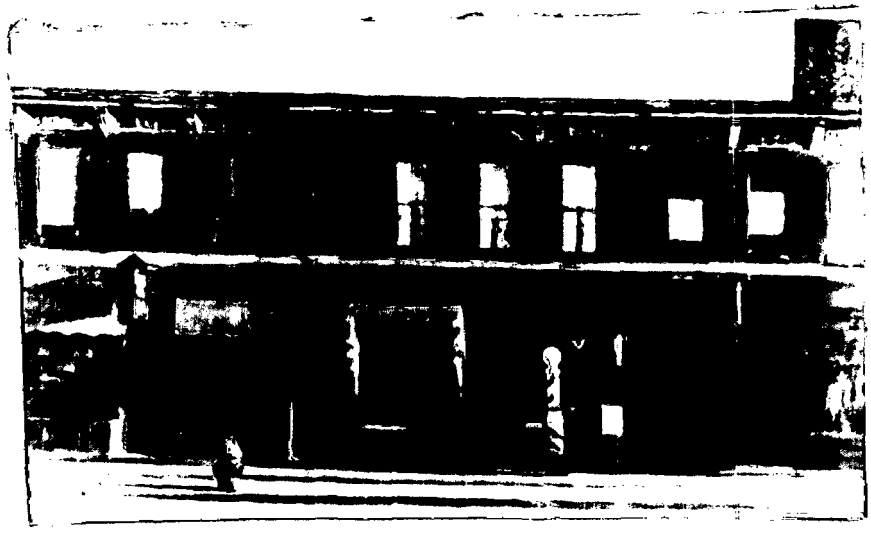

FIGURE 15

SUNDAY MORNING

FIGURE 16

HOTEL ROOM

IV. DRAWING METHODS

Before Hopper begins a painting the canvas is finished in his mind, distinct in composition and completely detailed.[7] Long visual familiarity and many pencil sketches are necessary for this painting process. Although he is not a slow painter, this insistence upon understanding intimately and expressing clearly his subjects create long intervals between his works.[8]

The materials used in his sketches consist of twelve by eighteen inch, slightly toothed, paper and conte crayon. Hopper's observations are graphically exhaustive studies and written notations concerning form, color and value are used frequently.[9] In his working drawing of Route 6, Eastham (Figure 22), not only has the exact composition been established but numerous notations are seen regarding hue, value and intensity. This drawing was made on the spot and the painting which resulted was unique for Hopper. He seldom sketches at the scene and he estimates it has been at least

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[7]Ernest Brace, "Edward Hopper," Magazine of Art, XXX (May, 1937), 275.

[8]"Drawings from the Artist's Portfolio," American Artist, XIV (May, 1950), 28.

[9]Ibid., p. 29.

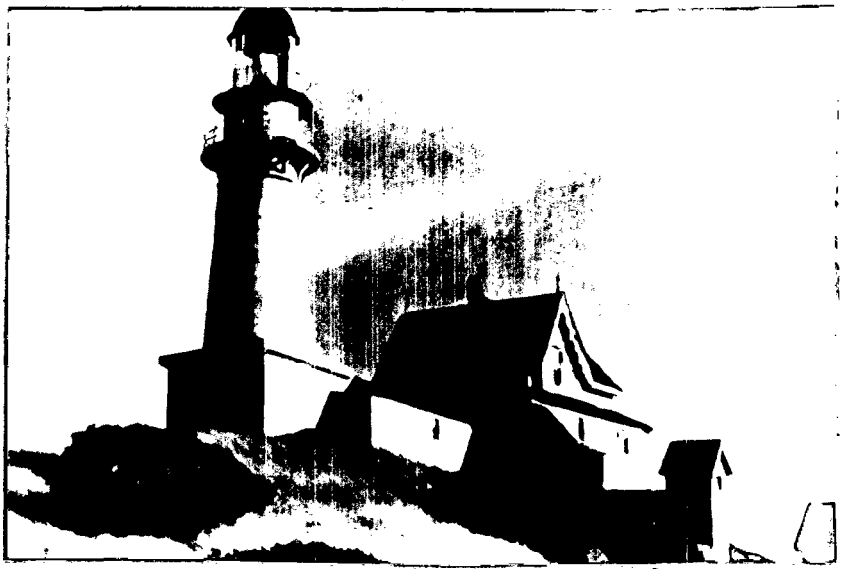

FIGURE 17

LIGHTHOUSE

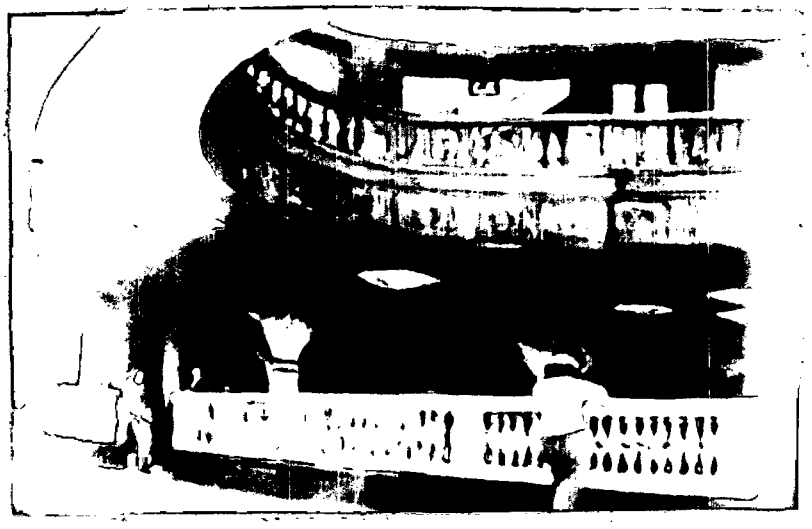

FIGURE 18

SHERIDAN THEATRE

twenty years since he painted, other than watercolor, on the spot.[10] It is unusual for Hopper to paint subject matter so specific.

A more common drawing process for Hopper has been of the type he used in the study for From Williamsburg Bridge. This black and white sketch (Figure 23) was more concerned with the abstract patterns of form and value. The resultant painting was representative of no particular place seen by Hopper, but rather it was a composite of impressions gained from many similar views from an elevated railway.

V. COMPOSITIONAL DESIGN

An important factor in Hopper's painting, as in that of so many great artists, has been his power, or ability of simplification. His impressions take on a form in his imagination that appeals to him and he transfers his vision of it to canvas.[11] With economy and severity he strips his compositions of all the impediments of unessential detail. Like an architect he simplified lines and combines masses the better to balance and harmonize them with one another. By elimination of incidents which might clutter or distort

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[10]"Silent Witness," Time, LXVIII (December 24, 1956), 28.

[11]J. O'Connon, Jr., "Edward Hopper, American Artist," Carnegie Magazine, X (March, 1937), 304.

FIGURE 19

GROUND SWELL

FIGURE 20

NIGHT HAWKS

his preconceived vision, pure form has become a vital and satisfactory part of his style (Figures 10, 24, and 27).

Corner Saloon, painted in 1913, evidenced a greater precision and angularity and an advance toward firm construction which became Hopper's trademarks. Critics have suggested that this angularity was an assimillation, by Hopper, of Cubism. Hopper insists, however, "The angularity was just natural to me; I like those angles."[12] Skylights (Figure 10) came even closer to a phase of Cubism in appearance, but the Hopper method of achieving those ends had little to do with the common methods of that movement. In spite of his concern for exact, vigorous representation, many of his pictures achieve compositions which are interesting from a purely formal point of view.[13] The use of light has been discussed. The geometric forms, naturalistically plausible, created by its striking and reflecting from furniture, walls, or buildings are noteworthy. The unmodulated stratification of light and dark is a stylistic trait.[14] The angles created

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[12]As quoted by Lloyd Goodrich, The Penguin Modern Painters, p. 5.

[13]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 13.

[14]Parker Tyler, "Edward Hopper: Alienation by Light," 291.

by these wedges of light play an extremely important part in the precision of design of a Hopper canvas.

Although certain Hopper stylistic traits are noticeable earlier, the artist has said, "After I took up etching, my painting seemed to crystallize."[15] Certainly Hopper's etchings contained devices observable in later painting. The bold, unbroken foreground horizontal, a sidewalk (Figure 15), the railing of a bridge (Figure 13), or a railroad track (Figure 14) was used in American Landscape (Figure 6), one of his earliest etchings. Barr described these structure lines by saying, "They are like the edge of a stage beyond which drama unfolds."[16] Goodrich, on the other hand, interprets them as giving a sensation of "ongoing" and coupled with the repetition of certain elements they carry the mind and eye out of the composition and convince us that it is part of a greater whole.[17] Intimate interior scenes and the use of dense shadows cut by shafts of light (Figures 5 and 7) found their first statement in his prints. These early etchings with their intricate handling of space, particularly room depths, were the prototypes of later oils. The problem

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[15]Suzanne Burrey, "Edward Hopper: The Emptying Spaces," Art Digest, XXIX (April 1, 1955), 10.

[16]Alfred H. Barr, Edward Hopper, p. 14.

[17]Lloyd Goodrich, The Penguin Modern Painters, p. 10.

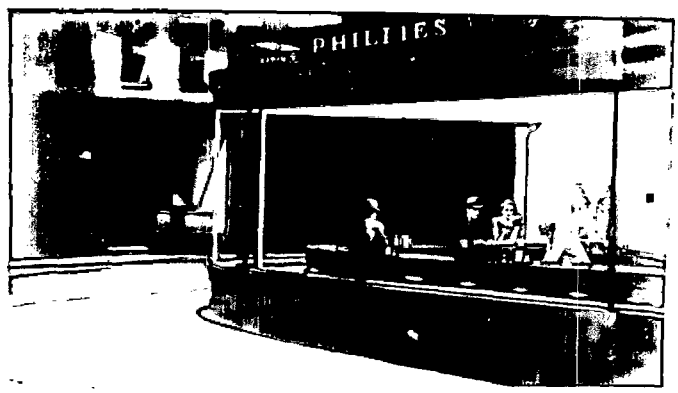

FIGURE 21

NIGHT HAWKS

FIGURE 22

ROUTE 6

of light and shadow areas used to maintain an even sharp focus of subject was resolved.[18] Except the color and technique of applying the paint, all of the major stylistic traits are, indeed, to be found in Hopper's prints of the 1920's.

Hopper's painting style, he felt was crystallized in 1923 with Apartment House (Figure 8). He, in his own words successfully achieved design, or form, in his oils for the first time; "...'form' in the Aristotelian sense of developed actuality as opposed to the undeveloped potentiality of matter, or content. It is the quality, if present in a picture, which makes it interesting when looked at upside down. You can test this quality...[in]...Apartment House."[19] Here, Hopper created an interesting arrangement of darks and lights moving in and out and around with its central axis just a little left of center. The geometrical pattern established strongely by the windows was pleasantly softened by the curves of the curtains, the woman, the chair, and the bureau. Hopper's hallmarks of light, air, and space were all clearly stated in this 1923 work.

Hopper has adhered to fact, yet his pictures are carefully designed. He has used cubical shapes that occur in

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[18]Suzanne Burrey, "Edward Hopper: The Emptying Spaces."

[19]John Morse, "Edward Hopper Interviewed," 63.

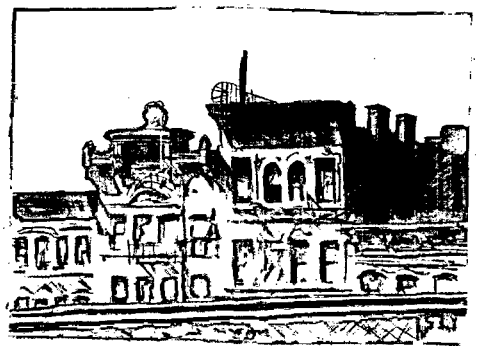

FIGURE 23

WILLIAMSBURG

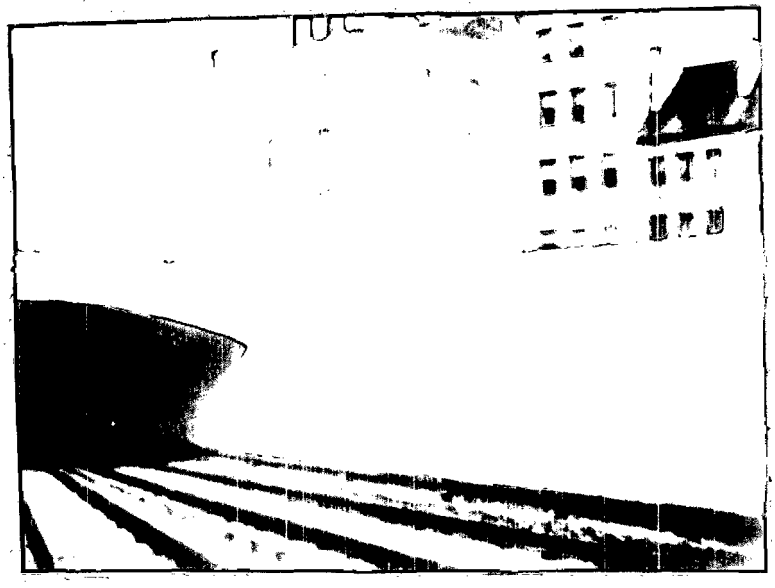

FIGURE 24

APPROACH TO CITY

nature in a seemingly uncontrived composition.[20] These angular shapes have been used most selectively, however; every object so formed has its plastic relationship to others and to the whole. The strong horizontal and vertical construction lines have not been concealed by Hopper.[21] With these ingeniously devised clean lines he has created perspective shafts which have in their limits more air, per cubic foot, than his solids.[22] The existence of these separating voids, which are largely untenanted by people, give a rhetorical emphasis to the emptiness and loneliness of Hopper's canvas world.[23] The massive solids, the positive of the voids, give a certain pseudo-primitivism to Hopper's paintings. His rather lumpy figure style accentuates this very solid appearance of his three-dimensional world. Look anywhere in this world and you meet a kind of wall--sky, wood, brick, or plaster.[24] Even his water has the solidity of earth (Figure 19). Hopper's compositions have been carefully designed to the

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[20]Charles Burchfield, "Hopper: Career of Silent Poetry: Retrospective at Whitney Museum," Art News, XXXXIX (March, 1950), 16.

[21]Lloyd Goodrich, The Penguin Modern Painters, p. 13.

[22]Parker Tyler, "Hopper/Pollock," Art News (Annual), XXVI (1957), 105.

[23]Ibid., p. 95. [24]Ibid.

FIGURE 25

SEVEN A. M.

FIGURE 26

CAPE COD MORNING

point of being semi-abstracted, a balance of monolithic solids and deep shafts of space has been created by strong, clean clean horizontal and vertical lines.

CHAPTER V

THE INTEGRITY OF THE MAN AND HIS WORK: STATURE ATTAINED

"By walking alone he has discovered the sound of his own voice."[1] This simple sentence is the summary of the life work of a man who followed his own impulses throughout his career. "There is a sincerity in his work and there is life."[2] "He has restricted himself with a discipline worthy of the oldest Puritan traditions..."[3] By using his own ideas, his own method and original compositional viewpoint, Hopper has created sincerity, bigness, simplicity, beauty and the all-enveloping loneliness of genuine art.[4] The reward for his restraint and refinement of continued discipline was slow in coming. Since the late 1920's when he was finally recognized, Hopper has maintained and strengthened his reputation and in the seventh decade of his life he is one of America's greatest living artists.

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[1]Jacob Getlar Smith, "Edward Hopper," American Artist, XX (January, 1956), 27.

[2]"Critics Differ On Hopper," Art Digest, VIII (November 15, 1933), 12.

[3]H. S. Francis, "New England Landscape By Edward Hopper," Cleveland Museum Bulletin, XIX (February, 1932), 22.

[4]Virgil Barker, "Exhibition, Rehn Galleries," Arts, XV (February, 1929), 115.

Hopper has carried on the realist tradition of the Ash Can School. Indeed, his roots extend to the Black Gang group of painters although his recognition did not come until some years later in the century.[5] Even so, his art fits into no convenient pigeon-hole of classification. It does not strive to be cosmopolitan or sophisticated, and certainly it could not be termed provincial. It is American, to be sure, but in the best mean of the term, devoid of the ridicule that this classification often implies. It is American because a native son, a product of her culture, has painted the life and emotions of her people. Perhaps this was the reason a Hopper was one of the fifty representative paintings included in the American Science, Technology and Culture Exposition the United States sent to Moscow in 1959.[6]

Hopper selects his characteristic subjects because of an obvious preference for them over all others. This choice is a personal one and is as integral a part of the man as his voice, handwriting or clothing tastes. His commonplace subjects are presented with the simplest and most honest means at his disposal. It seems only appropriate that such

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[5]Milton W. Brown, "Early Realism of Hopper and Burchfield," College Art Journal, VII (1947), 3.

[6]Lloyd Goodrich, "American Painting and Sculpture 1930-1959," College Art Journal, XVIII (Summer, 1959), 289.

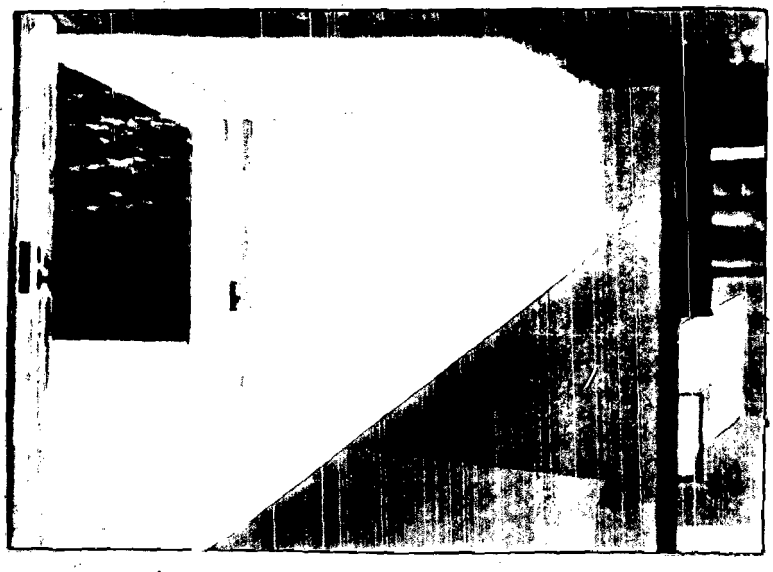

FIGURE 27

ROOM BY THE SEA

mundane material should be painted in nearly imperceivable brushwork. The simplification of design and realistic, often raw color are further manifestations of the integrity of this conservative artist. Even the laconic bluntness, the provocative terseness of his titles seem so right, so consistant.

Hopper spurned the enchantments of European styles to explore outermost limits of an extreme esthetic position. The results of this search produced his classic, humanist, rational master of idea and technique. "He is the Dean of American realist painting."[7]

The awards, honors, and prizes since Edward Hopper's initial success in 1923 are innumerable. His career has been one of spiraling ascendancy. It was written in 1937 that since 1924 he has been represented in the Carnegie International. It was at this time, 1924, that his Cape Cod Afternoon won the W. A. Clark prize at the Corcoran Gallery of Arts' Fifteenth Biennial. At that time this was the largest cash prize an artist could win ($2,000). This painting was also granted the Corcoran Gold Medal at the same show.[8]

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[7]John Morse, "Edward Hopper Interviewed," Art In America, XXXXVIII (Spring, 1960), 63.

[8]"Edward Hopper's Cape Cod Win, a $2,000 Prize," Life, II (May 3, 1937), 44.

Mr. Hopper has been on many juries. In 1939 he was the American member of the Carnegie International Jury of Award.[9] He served as a juror of the twenty-second annual Watercolor International four years later, to mention but two.[10] In a listing of the top five best one-man shows of 1948, held in New York, without qualifications for nationality, Hopper was the only American named.[11] In 1955 Edward Hopper was awarded the "...highest possible honor for a U. S. artist; The Gold Medal for Painting, by The National Institute of Arts and Letters."[12] There have been only five recipients of this award since it was established in 1909.[13] In 1956 he was elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters to fill the seat vacated by the late Carl Milles.[14]

Edward Hopper has created in painting the inevitable product of his political, economic, intellectual and spiritual

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[9]"These Four Men Will Jury The 1939 Carnegie," Art Digest, XIV (October 1, 1939), 8.

[10]"Portrait," Art Digest, SVII (May 15, 1934), 6.

[11]"The Year's Best: 1948," Art News, XXXXVII (January, 1949), 40.

[12]"Gold For Gold," Time, LXV (May 30, 1955), 72.

[13]"Winner of the National Institute of Arts and Letters' Gold Medal For Painting," Art News, LIV (May, 1955), 8.

[14]"Elected To Membership In The American Academy of Arts And Letters," Art News, LIV (January, 1956), 7.

life. No charming Frenchman or serene Dutchman could take Hopper's point of view. Imaginatively transfigured emotional experiences have been built into his paintings. His work is strongly rooted in our contemporary world, but follows no fashion. His earliest works are still new, through their originality and truth.

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An Abstract of

EDWARD HOPPER
AN ANALYSIS OF HIS ART

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of
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Edward Hopper: An Analysis of His Art.
(77 pp.) No.

Faculty Adviser: Robert Stinson

A searching analysis of the life and artistic activity of Edward Hopper was presented. Emphasis was placed on the artistic integrity and sensibilities which rise above current fashions and fads. The theory that a work of art must be communitive without verbalization was advanced. To do this, art must be a reflection of the whole man and the environment which produced his style.

In order to prove the demonstrability of this thesis, a thorough study of Hopper's personal life, habits, experiences, and academic influences, as well as his philosophic and aesthetic ideas, was undertaken. These in turn were paralleled with his artistic development. By paralleling his learning and experimental background with his artistic development, Hopper's communicative soundness and stylistic integrity was revealed. The major objective was to show the inseparability of the man and his creations.

Information was gained through art critics' evaluation of his work and interviews with the artist, both of which were found primarily in professional periodicals. Exhibition

catalogues and the opportunity to study original paintings were invaluable in this undertaking.

Representative examples of Hopper's work in water-colors, prints and oils accompany and illustrate the written material. These reproductions chronologically trace his development and point out certain influences and resultant effects. These were analyzed both in their immediate and final, broader applications. Through analysis of his technical means, themes, and symbolic implications, Hopper's message, or comment on the environment of his times was revealed.