

Hopper's work at Mint Museum

Edward Hopper was an extremely private man who granted few interviews. Much of what scholars know about his work comes from his wife Jo Nivison Hopper's journals.

"Edward Hopper: The Paris Years", organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, provides a tantalizing look at the early work of one of America's best known figurative painters.

The exhibition of 33 paintings and 15 works on paper opens at Charlotte's Mint Museum on February 22 and runs through June 1, 2003.

Hopper said little about even his most accomplished paintings, believing the work should speak for itself. Scholars have been left to speculate on the influences on his career, from his realist art instructors Robert Henri, William Merritt Chase and Kenneth Hayes Miller at the New York School of Art to the psychological reaction of a young man raised in a small town coming to grips with isolation and loss.

Edward Hopper's early talent for drawing and painting was encouraged by his mother Elizabeth.

The family's middle class concern for his financial security influenced Edward to attend the New York School of Illustrating before transferring to the New York School of Art. Hopper would work for 15 years as a commercial illustrator, work that he despised.

His skill at painting watercolors, however, is attributed to the years he spent as an illustrator. He was able to master strokes with the brush and had a remarkable eye for being able to adjust a composition to where it would have the most immediate and dramatic impact on the viewer.

After six years at the New York School of Art, Hopper left for France in October, 1906. His Paris studies coincided with the exciting era in the history of the Modern Movement.

While in Europe, Hopper also visited London, Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels, and Spain. The painting that left the greatest impression on him was Rembrandt's "The Night Watch."

Hopper's palette in Paris brightened considerably from the previous somber New York work. Examples

of this transformation include "Le Quai Grands Augustins" and "Le Parc de Saint Cloud."

He remained committed to realism and exhibited some of the basic characters that he was to retain throughout his career—compositional style based on simple large geometric forms, flat masses of color and the use of architectural elements in his scenes with strong verticals, horizontals, and diagonals. Hopper's early Paris work favored the depiction of small streets such as "Steps in Paris."

While modern painting failed to impress the young American, the "poet of modern civilization" did. Hopper discovered the poetry and critical writing of Charles Pierre Baudelaire (1821-1867) whose formulation of his aesthetic theory served as the inspiration for the Symbolist Movement away from painting by observation to an expression of more subjective, intellectual, and emotional visions.

Hopper was to recite Baudelaire's work through his life. The two men shared interests in solitude, in city life, in the silence of the night and in places of travel.

Hopper's figures in his mature work seem far from home, they sit or stand alone, looking at a letter on the edge of a hotel bed or drinking alone at a bar or gazing out the window of a moving train. Their faces are vulnerable and introspective, adrift in transient places.

Hopper's personality was perfectly suited to the painting he produced. His realistic depictions of everyday urban scenes allowed viewers to view the images and situation in a personal manner.

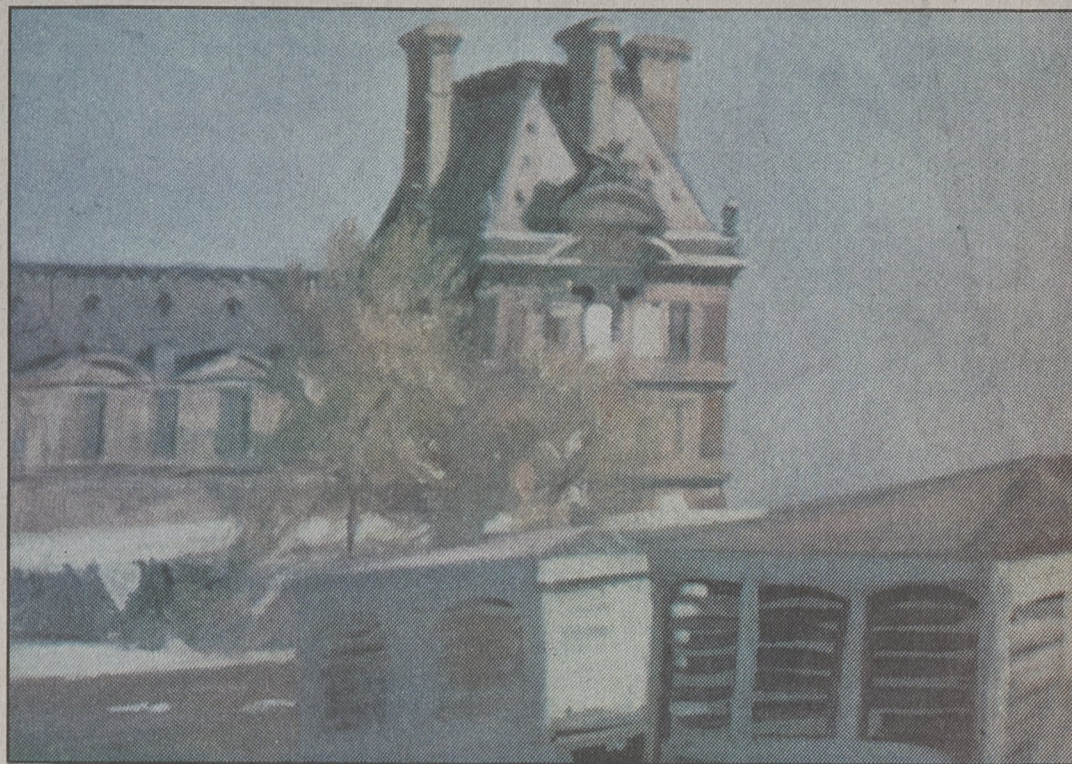
His emphasis on shapes and angles and the stark play of light and shadow had the power to shock viewers into recognition of the strangeness of familiar surroundings.

Edward Hopper was 43 years old before painting what is generally acknowledged to be his first fully mature picture, "The House by the Railroad" in 1925. His deliberate, disciplined sparseness combined apparently incompatible qualities.

Just a few of the upcoming public programs with the Hopper exhibition at the Mint Museum will include

Home School Drawing Classes February 20 and March 6; Lecture, "Edward Hopper, the Paris Years," March 2; Senior Day Tours, March 6 and April 3; and Art History Course: "American In Paris" March 11, 18, and 25.

The Mint Museum of Art is located at 2730 Randolph Road, Charlotte. Admission is \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors, and \$3 ages 6-18, and free for members and children 5 and under. Hours are Tuesday 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday 12 noon-5 p.m. Tuesday evening from 5 p.m.-10 p.m. are free hours. For information, call the museum at 704-337-2000 or check the website at www.mintmuseum.org.



Edward Hopper, Le Pavillon de Flore

Photo courtesy of The Mint Museum

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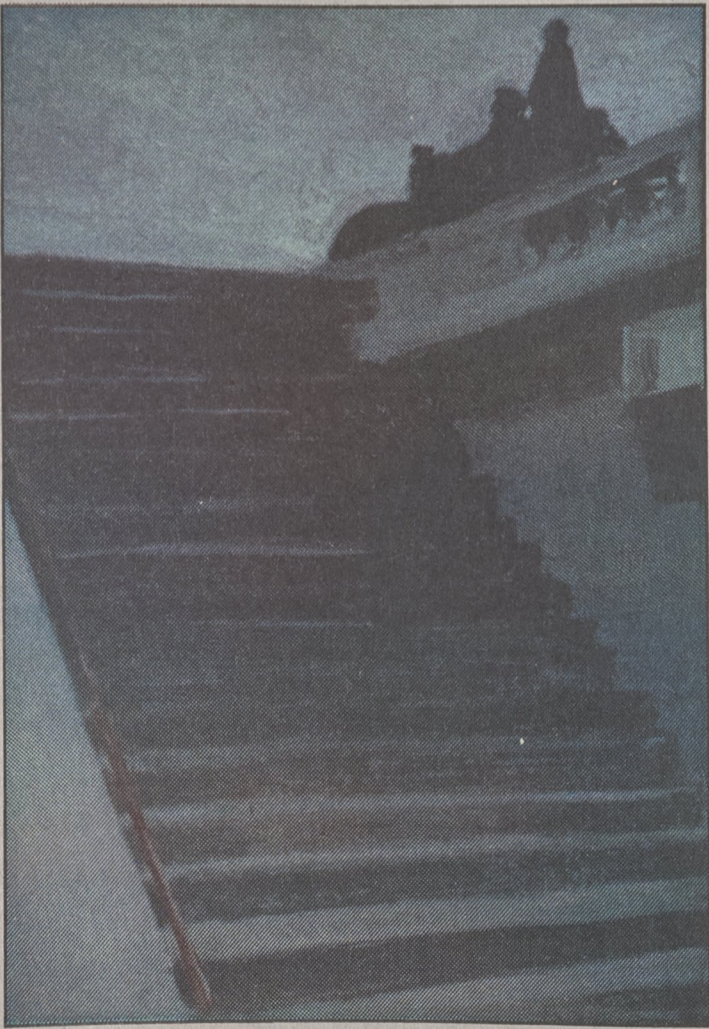


Photo courtesy of The Mint Museum
Edward Hopper, Steps in Paris