

Edward Hopper | American Master

by Margot Morrell

SELF-PORTRAIT

1925 - 1930

Edward Hopper was born in Nyack, NY, in 1882. His father owned a dry-goods store.

The Hoppers were descendants of prosperous Dutch farmers whose roots in New York and northern New Jersey stretched back to the 1650s.

Taciturn and remote, the scourge of interviewers, Edward Hopper was the embodiment of a dour Yankee.



Whitney Museum of American Art

DEVELOPING A GIFT

From an early age, Edward displayed an extraordinary talent for drawing, but his parents insisted he pursue a practical career path - commercial art.

During the winter of 1899, he studied illustration via a correspondence course.

The following year, he began a six-year program at the forward-leaning New York School of Art established in 1896 by widely-admired American impressionist, William Merritt Chase.



Looking at the Sea, 1891, Edward Hopper, age 9
Private Collection

ROBERT HENRI

Art teacher Henri urged his students to use their talents, “to make a stir in the world” and to “forget about art and paint pictures of what interests you in life.”

Hopper took that advice to heart.



Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney
by Robert Henri, 1916
Whitney Museum of American Art

THE ARMORY SHOW

In 1913, a group of artists banded together to organize the first large exhibit of modern art in America – the result was the 1913 Armory Show - 300 artists contributed 1300 works.

Among them was 30-year-old Edward Hopper who sold a 1911 oil called *Sailing* for \$250 to a private collector.

It was Hopper's first sale of his artwork. It was also his last sale for ten years.



Carnegie Museum of Art



“Living Up To Your Employment System”
The Magazine of Business, July 1913

ILLUSTRATOR

Hopper used his skills as a commercial illustrator to capture his frustrations about knocking on doors at ad agencies and magazines looking for free-lance work.



Google Maps, Screenshot

GREENWICH VILLAGE

Hopper commuted to New York during his school years and first moved into the city in 1908.

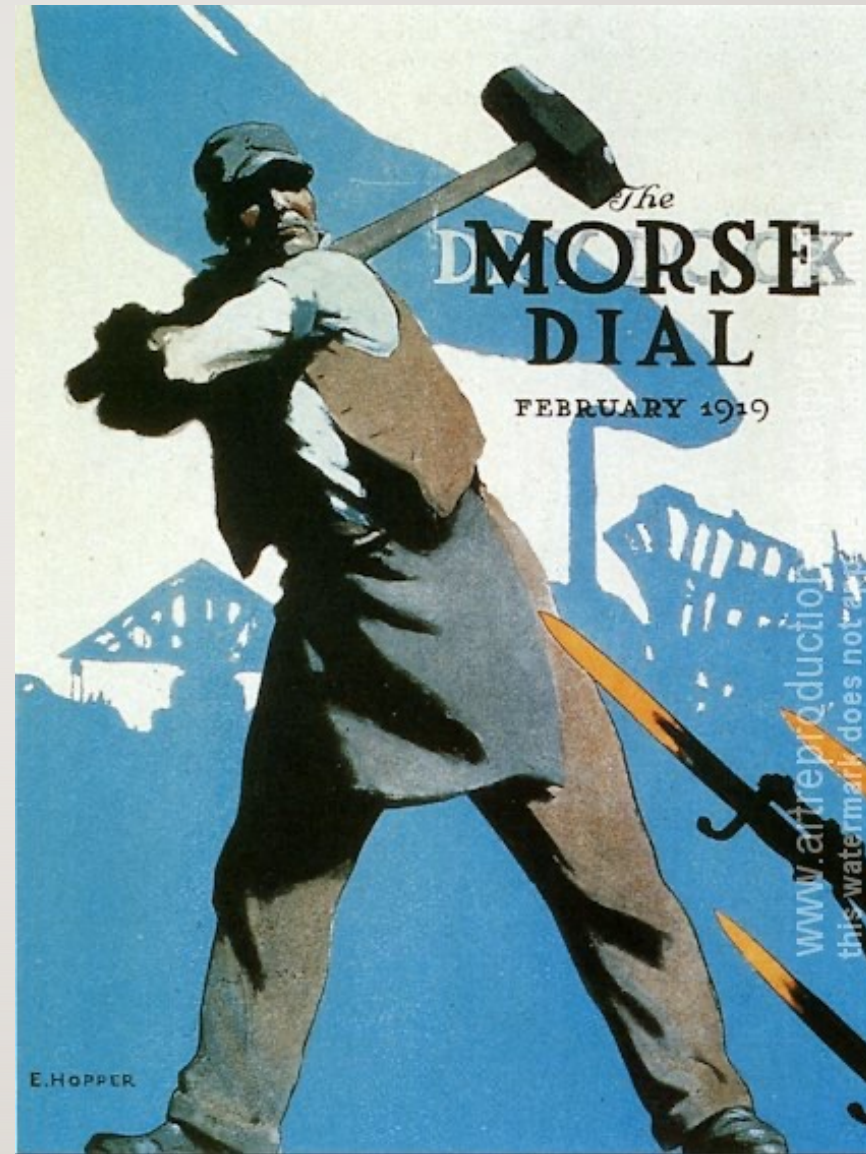
In 1913, he found a studio at 3 Washington Square North - his home for the rest of his life.

His studio was as spartan as the rooms in his paintings. Biographer Lloyd Goodrich described it as "looking somewhat like a carpenter's shop."

1ST PRIZE

As World War I raged in Europe, *The Sun* newspaper sponsored a contest for the cover of Brooklyn-based Morse Dry Dock and Repair Company's in-house newsletter.

Hopper's cover, titled *Smash the Hun*, won first prize.





Portrait, 1918, *The Sun*

PORTRAIT, 1918

“Partly through choice, I was never willing to hire out more than three days a week [as an illustrator].

I kept some time to do my own work.

Illustrating was a depressing experience. And I didn't get very good prices because I didn't often do what they wanted.”

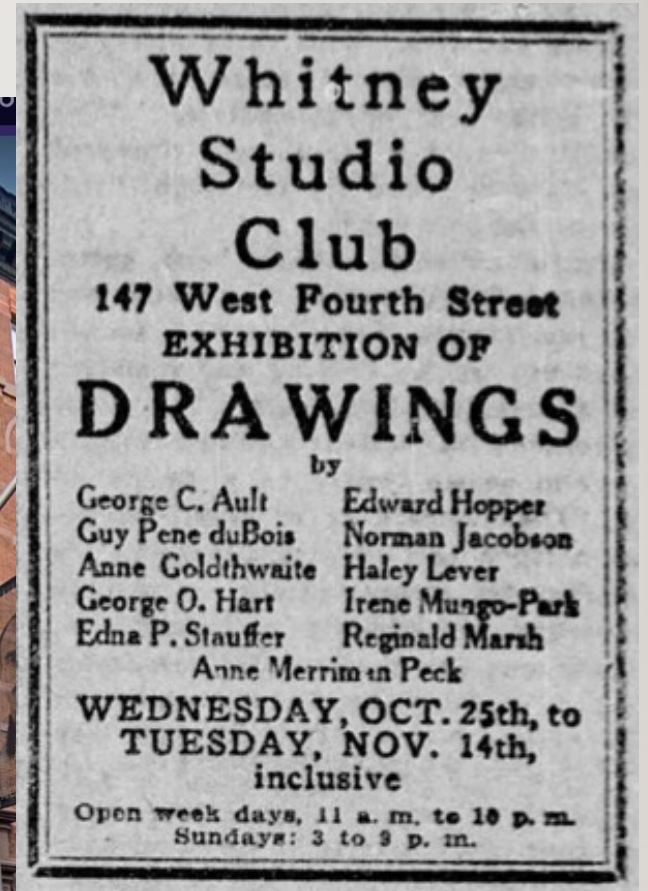
Edward Hopper
Art Digest, April 1, 1955

WHITNEY STUDIO CLUB

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney opened a “cheerful” space for young artists to meet, chat and exhibit on the parlor and basement floors of an “old fashion house” on W. 4th St. a few steps off 6th Ave.

The Whitney Studio Club launched Hopper’s career as a fine artist.

Exhibits at the Club brought his “delightful” work favorable attention.





THE MANSARD ROOF

In 1923, Hopper was forty-one years old and had had limited success as an artist.

That was about to change thanks to his talent and three supporters – a generous teacher Robert Henri, visionary Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and art critic Helen Appleton Read, daughter of a Brooklyn banker.

That year, Hopper had his first sale in ten years when *The Mansard Roof* was purchased by a patron for the Brooklyn Museum.



Currier Museum of Art
Manchester, NH

THE BOOTLEGGERS

In late 1925, Helen Appleton Read wrote about a Hopper painting on exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum.

“The title ... serves only as an exclamation point to emphasize the originality of the composition...

...evidence of Hopper’s ability to compose the commonplace into dramatic and powerful designs.”



Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

DRUG STORE, 1927

When Hopper delivered this painting to the Rehn Gallery, Peggy Rehn thought the reference to Ex-Lax was “indelicate” and had Hopper change the second X to a C.

Bostonian John T. Spaulding bought the painting for \$1,500, and had Hopper change it back.

“Now known as Drug Store, the painting is one of Hopper’s early masterpieces. Many of the themes and devices seen in his later work are evident in this striking picture.”

Elliot Bostwick Davis, *American Painting*
MFA

THE HOUSE BY THE RAILROAD, 1925

For a “retrospective” of his work at the Museum of Modern Art in 1933, Hopper wrote, “...it is the art of all time of definite personalities that remain forever modern by the fundamental truth that is in them.

It makes Moliere at his greatest as new as Ibsen or Giotto as modern as Cezanne.”

Edward Hopper
"Notes on Painting"
Museum of Modern Art Catalogue, 1933



Museum of Modern Art

AUTOMAT, 1927

“So much of every art is an expression of the subconscious that it seems to me most of all the important qualities are put there unconsciously, and little of importance by the conscious intellect. But these are things for the psychologist to untangle.”

Edward Hopper,
Letter to Charles H. Sawyer,
Curator of The Addison Gallery of American Art at
Phillips Academy, Andover, MA
October 29, 1939



Des Moines Art Center

EARLY SUNDAY MORNING, 1930

SEVENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK
WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

“All I ever wanted to do is to paint sunlight on the side of a wall.”

Edward Hopper, 1933



RICHIE'S
BARBER SHOP

GROUND SWELL, 1939

“My aim in painting has always been the most exact transcription possible of my most intimate impressions of nature.

If this end is unattainable, so, it can be said, is perfection in any other ideal of painting or in any other of man's activities.”

Edward Hopper
“Notes on Painting,”
Museum of Modern Art Catalogue, 1933



National Gallery of Art

GAS, 1940

“Great art is the outward expression of an inner life in the artist, and this inner life will result in his personal vision of the world.”

No amount of skillful invention can replace the essential element of imagination.”

Edward Hopper
Reality Magazine, 1953



Museum of Modern Art

NIGHTHAWKS, 1942

ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

“In general, it can be said that a nation's art is greatest when it most reflects the character of its people.”

Edward Hopper, “Notes on Painting,”
Museum of Modern Art, Catalogue, 1933

Jo and Hopper were the models for the customers at the diner.



Sketch for Nighthawks
Whitney Museum of American Art



Nighthawks, 1942
Art Institute of Chicago

SEVEN A.M., 1948

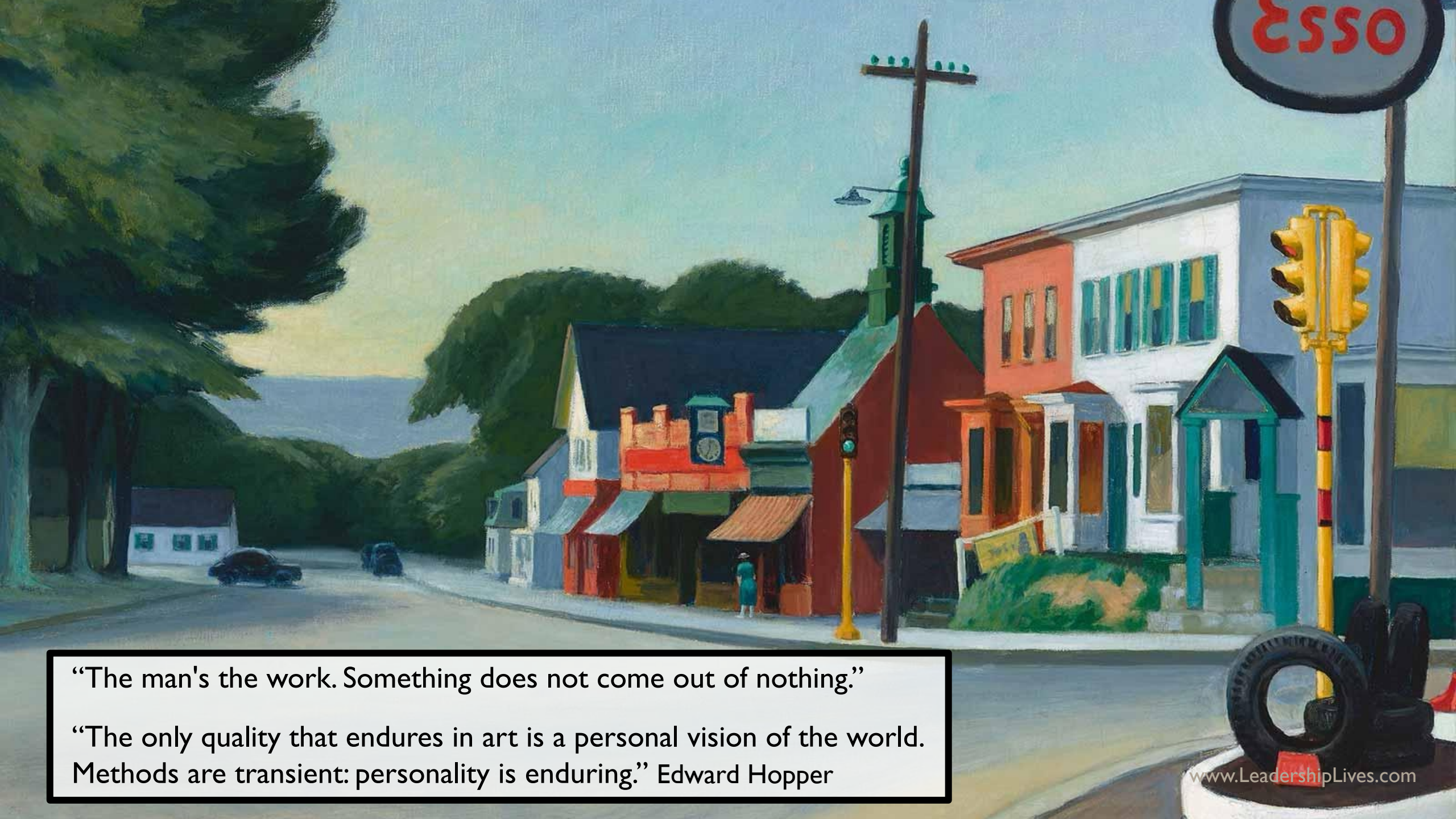
“Originality is neither a matter of inventiveness nor method, it is the essence of personality.”

“It is hard for me to know what to paint. It comes slowly.”

Edward Hopper



Whitney Museum of American Art



“The man's the work. Something does not come out of nothing.”

“The only quality that endures in art is a personal vision of the world.
Methods are transient: personality is enduring.” Edward Hopper



Chop Suey, 1929
Private Collection