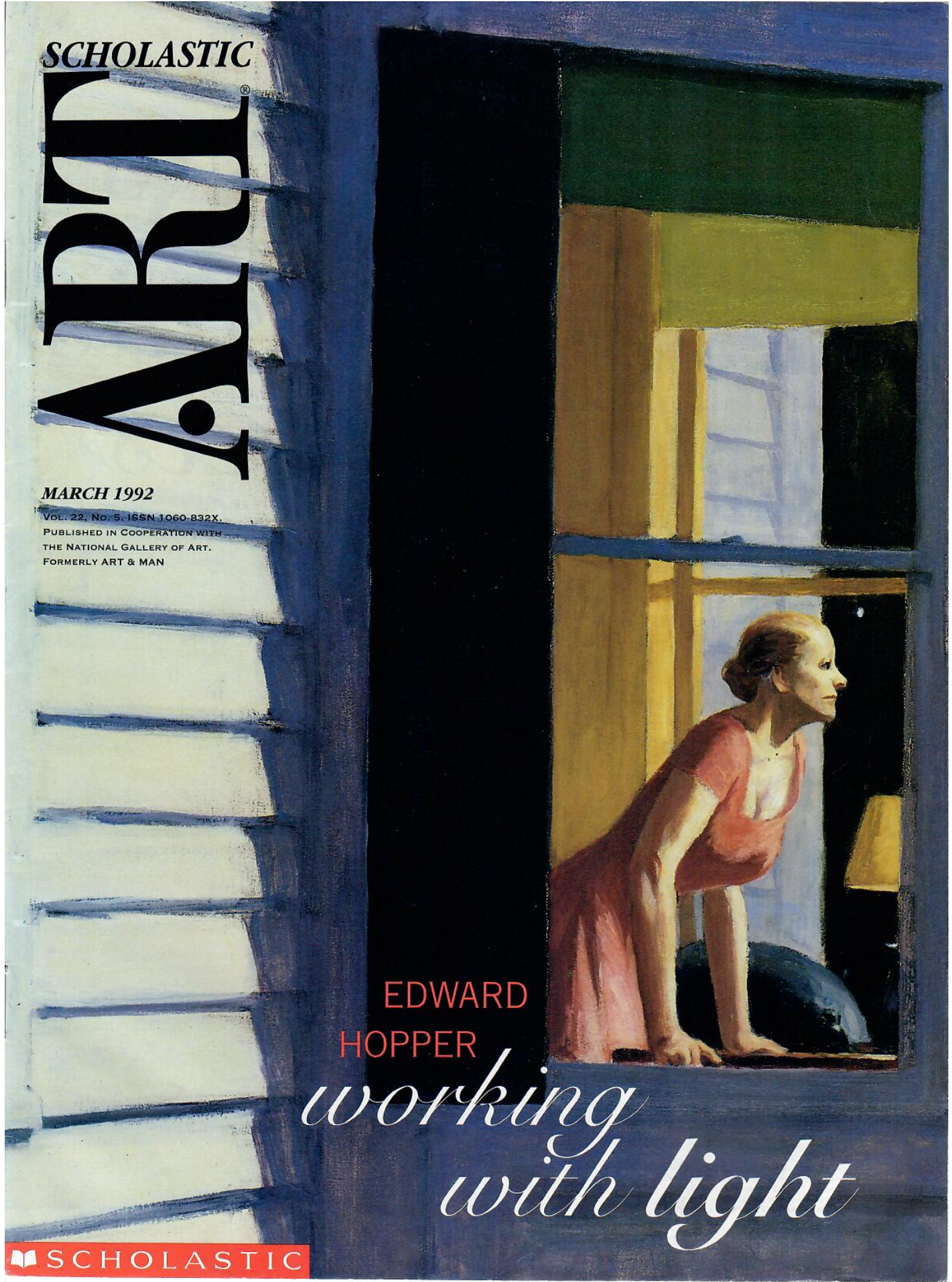


SCHOLASTIC

ART

MARCH 1992

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EDWARD
HOPPER

*working
with light*

 SCHOLASTIC



This self-portrait, done when Edward Hopper was in his 30s, conveys the artist's quiet and solitary nature.

Edward Hopper (1882-1967).
Self Portrait, 1926-30. Oil.
 25 1/8" x 20 1/4". Whitney Museum
 of American Art, NY, NY.

portraits of places

SCHOLASTIC
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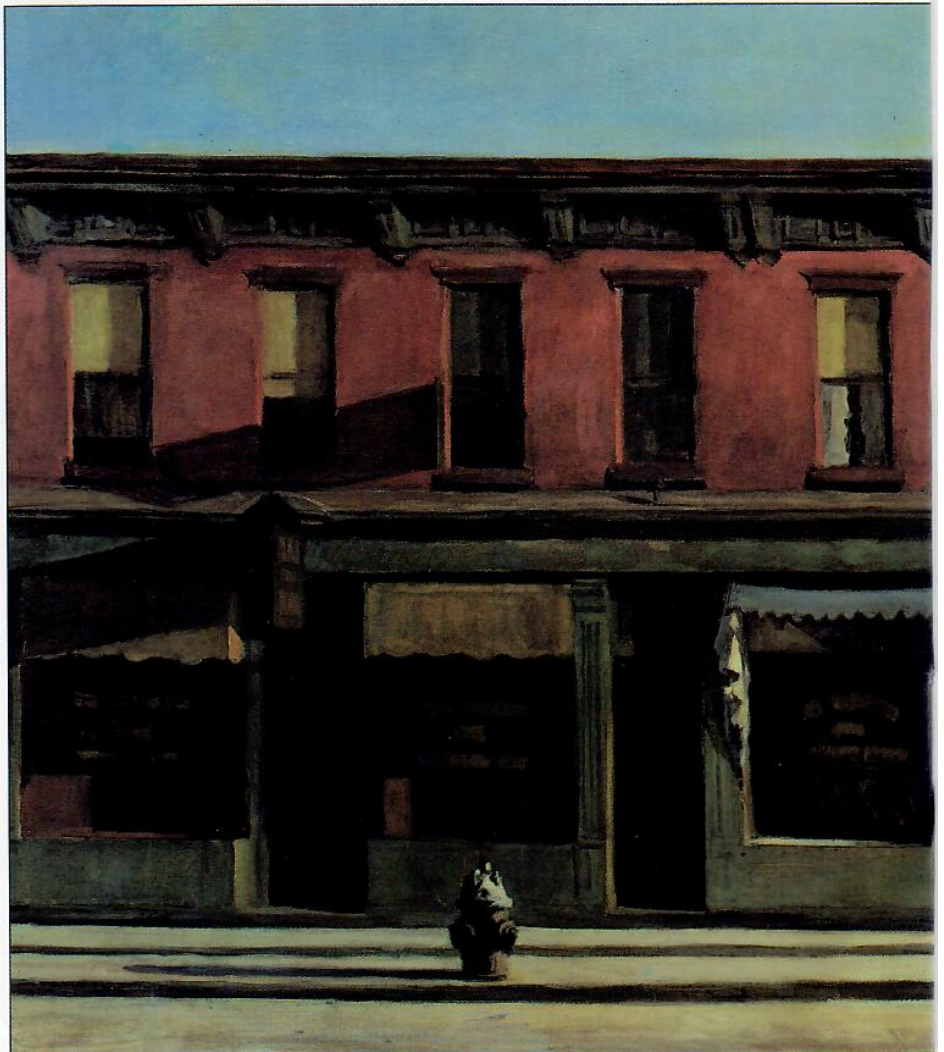
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*“What I really want to do is to paint sunlight
on the side of a house.”* —EDWARD HOPPER

W

hen we think of a portrait, we usually imagine a painting of a person. A good portrait (like the one on the left) should tell the viewer something about the character and personality of its subject. Twentieth-century American artist Edward Hopper was most famous for his portraits of *places*. He captured the “character” of city streets, houses, railroads, and shops. Hopper has been compared to a film director blocking out a scene and using dramatic lighting to create a mood.

Hopper was born in Nyack, New York, in 1882. The Hopper family ran a dry-goods store and attended the local Baptist church. As a child, Edward Hopper enjoyed drawing, and after graduating from high school in 1899,

planned to become an artist. He studied illustration and in 1906, went to Paris. Rather than attend an art school, Hopper painted on his own and studied the works of the European masters. He worked outdoors, emphasizing the qualities of light and shadow. When Hopper returned to the United States in 1907, he worked as an advertising illustrator. Hopper disliked this job, which gave him little time to do his own painting.

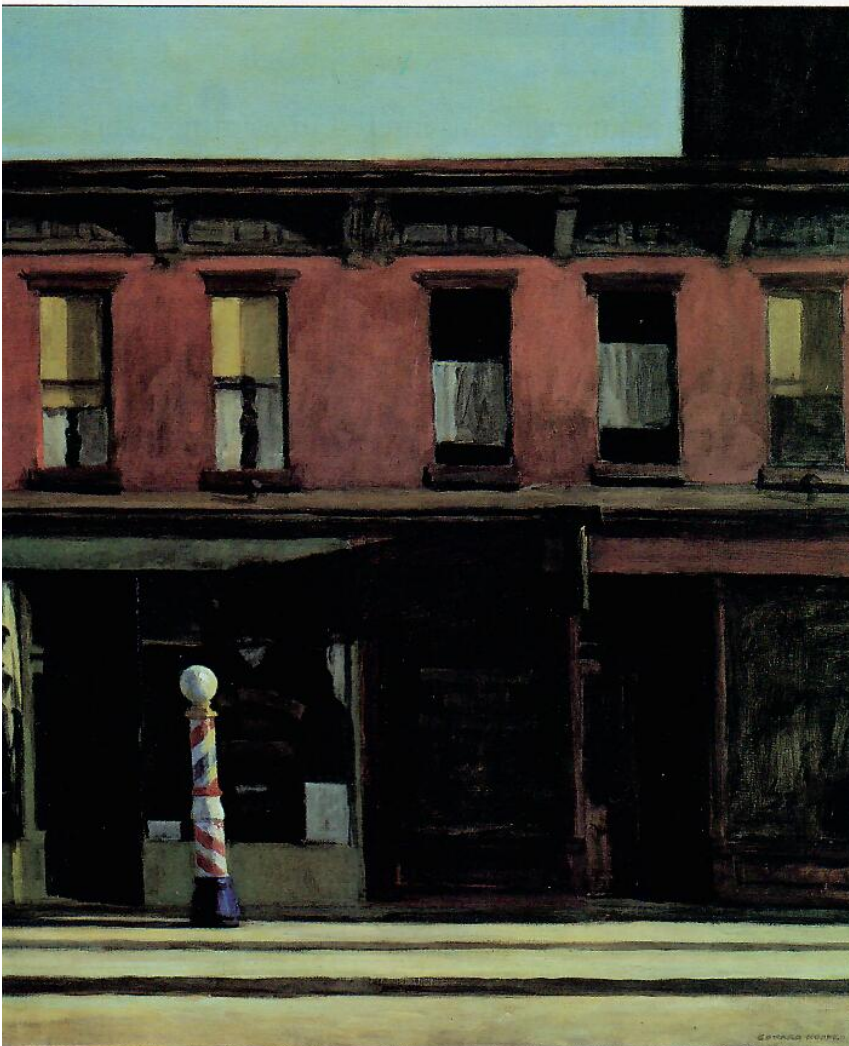
Edward Hopper was drawn to America’s cities and their varied architecture. *Early Sunday Morning* (left) is probably Hopper’s best-known “cityscape.” It has the feeling of a day just beginning; we feel the solitude before the streets and stores become filled with people. The shadows cast by the sunlight lead the eye out past the boundaries of the painting. Hopper has placed the buildings close to the picture plane (the front surface of the painting), giving us a feeling of “being there.” The horizontal lines of the street and buildings are broken up by the vertical forms of the barber pole and fire hydrant and the repeated rectangular shapes of the doors and windows. The dark, complementary (opposite) colors—red and green—of the buildings set against the bright, blue sky emphasize the melancholy feeling of a city street at dawn.

By 1924, Edward Hopper had begun to make enough from his own paintings to give up illustration. That same year, Hopper married a fellow painter—Josephine Nivison—who was also the model for almost every female figure her husband painted. The Hoppers lived a quiet life in their New York City apartment and also enjoyed their home in the country. Edward Hopper died in his studio at the age of 85. His career had spanned 60 years, and during this time he had created some of the most unforgettable scenes of 20th-century America.

Text by Suzanne Bilyeu

Hopper’s use of light transforms this everyday scene into an image that symbolizes the American city.

Early Sunday Morning, 1930. Oil. 35” x 60”. Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, NY. Photo by Malcolm Varon.





“I’ve always been interested in light—more than most contemporary painters.”

—EDWARD HOPPER

Solitary figures seen through windows, like the woman in the work above, were a favorite theme of Edward Hopper’s.

Cape Cod Morning, 1950. Oil. 34 1/8" x 40 1/8". National Museum of American Art, NY, NY. (Detail on cover).

As Edward Hopper’s work matured and his interest in painting the effects of light grew, he began to depict specific times of day in many of his paintings. He used different effects of **light and shadow** to create a

mood or atmosphere. In *Cape Cod Morning* (above), the side of a house is bathed in the **bright, morning light**. The canvas is **divided in half**, and the **geometric forms** of the house contrast with the **organic shapes** of the woman and trees. The composition is filled with strong **vertical and diagonal lines**. The “wedge” of the bay window **frames** the figure of the woman and juts out into the wooded area, like the front of a ship moving forward. The forward-leaning pose of the woman gives a feeling of expectation. The suggestion of unfulfilled hopes and dreams is heightened by the visual tension of the three pairs of **contrasting complementary** (opposite) colors—yellow/purple, red/green, blue/orange.

Backlighting usually emphasizes dark silhouetted shapes against a bright sky. *Railroad Sunset* (right) features a small, lonely station house and telephone pole in front of an orange and yellow sunset. The **abrupt cropping** of the glinting tracks suggests a feeling of the space beyond the boundaries of the painting. The **horizontal lines** of the tracks, clouds, and curving hills are interrupted by the **vertical lines** of the railroad tower and the pole.

Railroad tracks are a recurring theme in Hopper’s works. To Hopper, they may have symbolized the rootless quality of modern life—the feeling of “just passing through.”

When you look at *Rooms by the Sea* (above, right), from what **point of view** do you think it was painted—inside a house, outside, looking from one room into another? It is a painting of pure **light**, filled with the bright **reflected** sunlight of the afternoon. **Reflected light and shadows form geometric shapes** that are made up of **vertical and diagonal lines**. The painting is filled with **contrasts: light/shadow, inside/outside, land/sea**, as well as **contrasting complementary colors**. Cover the *edges* of this work. What you have left is an almost pure **geometric abstraction** of two simple shapes based on light and shadow.

Backlighting in *Railroad Sunset* creates a feeling of stillness and emptiness.

Railroad Sunset, 1929. Oil. 28 1/2" x 47 3/4". Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, NY. Photo by Geoffrey Clements, NY.



***Rooms by the Sea*,
one of Hopper's
later works, is based
on reflected light.**

Rooms by the Sea, 1951. Oil.
29" x 40 1/8". Yale University
Art Gallery, New Haven, Ct.

times of day

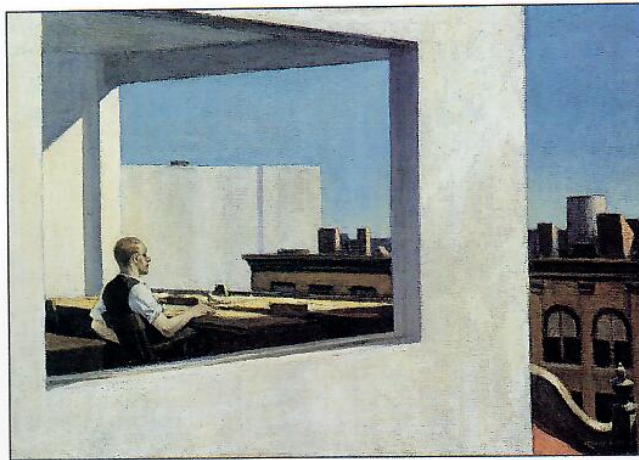


**MASTERPIECE
OF THE MONTH**

Preview

*“The figures
were not what
interested me;
it was the light
streaming
down onto the
city streets.”*

—EDWARD HOPPER



city light





Edward Hopper was one of the first artists to realistically portray the American city. Until the 20th-century, most American artists were interested in showing the grandeur of the wilderness. Even in the

early 1900s, American painters were influenced by European art movements. Most artists either ignored the great cities that were growing up or glorified the spectacular skyscrapers. Hopper showed the other side of the American city—the sense of loneliness and isolation that grew up as quickly as the cities and towns did. He expressed the depressing aspects of urban life, as well as the hidden beauty.

Since Hopper lived in a large city, he would explore New York, looking until he found a subject he liked. In *Manhattan Bridge Loop* (above), the artist brings to life a bridge and apartment buildings by **contrasting** their **sunlit shapes** with **dark, cast shadows**. **Abrupt cropping** makes the scene seem to “extend” beyond the frame, while the **dark diagonal** that cuts across the painting draws the eye to the single person on the left. This small figure is dwarfed by the sweeping lines of a bridge made for cars, not people.

Hopper was intrigued by office settings—people in small, rectangular spaces looking at other people in little boxes. *Office in a Small City* (above, left) is painted from an unusual **point of view**—that of an observer outside the window. The window becomes a **frame** for the office interior. Hopper **contrasts** the **natural**

sunlight outside with the **artificial light** of the office. **Strong diagonals** draw the eye to the **focal point**, the man at the desk inside.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many people tried to escape their worries by going to the movies. Movie theaters resembled enormous palaces filled with chandeliers, columns, and gold paint. This helped to create a “fantasy world” like the one shown in Hopper’s painting *New York Movie* (left). The theater is bathed in **soft, artificial light**. Hopper has **divided the canvas in half** by placing a thick wall in the center. To the right, in the “real world,” a bored-looking usherette waits for the show to end. This woman isn’t at the movies for fun—she’s at work. A wall lamp **highlights** her brooding pose.

Hopper was fascinated by night in the city. *Nighthawks* (on pages 8-9) expresses the loneliness and alienation of people out late in a large city. The **bright, artificial light** inside an all-night diner contrasts with the **darkness** of the world outside. We see the people inside through a window. The figures sit together, but do they look as though they are talking? The **diagonals** and the **wedge-like shape** of the diner, as well as the **complementary reds and greens**, further heighten the sense of isolation and detachment.

Edward Hopper included very few people in his cityscapes. Both figures in the two paintings above have their backs to the viewer.

Office in a Small City, 1953. Oil. 28" x 40". Metropolitan Museum of Art, George A. Hearn Fund, 1953, NY, NY.

Manhattan Bridge Loop, 1928. Oil. 35" x 60". Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.

Hopper painted many aspects of city life, including the New York movie theater shown on the left.

New York Movie, 1939. Oil. 32 1/4" x 40 1/8". Museum of Modern Art, NY, NY.



SCHOLASTIC

ART

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH #5

Nighthawks by



Edward Hopper (1882-1967). *Nighthawks*, 1942. Oil. 33 1/4" x 60 1/8". Art Institute of Chicago; Friends of American Art Collection.

Edward Hopper

STREET SCENES: Three American artists who have used light to create a mood.



Street Shadows

Early 20th-century photographer Berenice Abbott used **light** and **sharp focus** to capture this block of “row” houses in New York City. The large **geometric structure** is centered in the middle of the photo, framed by space on all sides. The bit of skyscraper at the left edge and the **intersecting diagonals** at

the top and bottom suggest the dynamic urban activity that surrounds this “island” of small, individual houses. The **harsh, morning light** casts deep shadows and textures which emphasize the small-town neighborhood quality of these little buildings set in the middle of a large, streamlined city.

At what time of day do you think the buildings above were photographed?

Berenice Abbott (1898-1991). *West Street Row*, New York, 1938.
Commerce Graphics Ltd, Inc., East Rutherford, NJ.

Cities of Clay

In the work below, left, contemporary American artist Lidya Buzio uses her medium, sculpture, to explore the city scenes she sees every day. Born in Uruguay, Buzio was influenced by South American pre-Columbian pottery. When she moved to New York City, she began to incorporate the city-

scape into her clay pots by painting on the unfired clay then burnishing, firing, and waxing them. Compare Buzio's *Large Blue Roofscape* with Edward Hopper's *Early Sunday Morning* on pages 2-3 or *Manhattan Bridge Loop* on pages 6-7. Buzio's **simplified, sunlit** buildings stand out against the clear blue sky, while the **complementary blues and oranges** add to the urban feeling. By painting this scene on a curved surface, the **contrast** between the **geometric rectangular buildings** and the **organic curves of the jar** create **extreme diagonals and distorted perspectives**. This adds to the sense of contemporary urban anxiety and dislocation.



What makes the street scene on the left so unusual?

Lidya Buzio b. 1948. *Large Blue Roofscape*, 1986. Burnished earthenware, 11 x 15" d. Collection of Katharine and Anthony Del Vecchio. Photo by Ivan Dalla Tana.

The Light of Evening

Compare the painting *Street Light* on the right with Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* on pages 8-9. Both are street scenes set at night; both are artificially lighted; both include four figures. This painting, done by early 20th-century American artist Constance Coleman Richardson, captures the feeling of a summer evening in a midwestern suburb. The **soft light** from the street lamp shines through the trees **spotlighting** the **high-lighted** figures below. Richardson's people seem less alone than Hopper's—their **solid, simplified shapes** seem to relate to



each other somewhat. The **focal point** of the painting, the figure of the daughter under the spotlight, stares up at her mother while the mother calls across the street to a younger child. A man sits on the steps of his

house in the upper left-hand corner. The **harmonious, related colors** (greens, blues, and yellows) as well as the **soft, glowing lighting** stress the calm, quiet feeling of a suburban neighborhood.

What kind of mood does the painting above capture?

Constance Coleman Richardson b. 1905. *Street Light*, 1930. Oil. 28 x 36". Indianapolis Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. James W. Fesler.



Mindy Boldt: PAINTING LIGHT

Does the scene on the right—a yellow house set against a bright, blue sky—remind you of any of the paintings you saw earlier in this issue? This Scholastic Art Award-winning “portrait” of an old house

in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was done by eighteen-year-old Mindy Boldt while she was a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran High School in Milwaukee. Mindy is a freshman this year, majoring in graphic design at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. She knows she’d like to go on in the design field, but will wait and see what area interests her most. In her free time, Mindy enjoys playing tennis and sewing.



Mindy, who began studying art in her first year of high school, plans to pursue a career in the graphic-design field.

■ How did you get interested in art?

I took my first art class in my freshman year of high school. I seemed to be pretty good at it, so I took more advanced classes. I ended up really liking art—especially painting. I’ve done portraits of people, cars, and places. My favorite project was a giant picture of popcorn.

■ Why did you paint this house?

It started as a class assignment. We had to paint something architectural. Our high school teacher showed us a bunch of photographs he had taken of houses around the neighborhood. I liked one that caught a neat angle and had shadows on one side.

■ Did you change anything in the way the house looked?

I did some things to make the house and background look more dramatic.

I emphasized the tree shadows, making them more diagonal. Increasing the light

and dark contrasts added more drama to the picture—I made the sky darker so the bright, yellow house would stand out against it. I added details, like the decorations, the little branches, and the faint streaks in the sky.

I also cropped in closer and increased the angles of the house. I used vertical brushstrokes too, so it increases the effect of looking up from below.

Overall, I liked the painting’s composition. It can be kind of boring to look at something straight on, or to place it in the center of the picture. I like showing just a part of an object. It keeps the viewer guessing about the rest.

■ Whose house is this?

I really don’t know. There’s a section of Milwaukee that has a lot of old houses in it, but I’ve never been there.

■ How did you do this painting?

I worked partly from photographs and partly from my imagination. I sketched the

Photos by Allen Fredrickson



This looks to me like the kind of place where you would never see anyone around. It might be a house that people would be afraid to walk into...

We select our Artist of the Month only from among students who have won medals in the current Scholastic Art Awards Program. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadlines and rules books.

house first and drew a general outline. Then I started painting the sky. It was the easiest part since there's no detail in it.

Next I painted the two windows with all the shadows in them. They were very detailed. Because I used oil paints, I had lots of time to change things around if I wanted to. Oils don't dry fast.

I painted the yellow part of the house and filled in all of the shadows last.

■ **How long did it take you?**

It took me nearly a month to complete the painting. I did most of it during our class time, and we met every day for 45 minutes.

■ **What time of day is it?**

It's supposed to be in the late afternoon, when the sun is still strong and the shadows are beginning to get long.

■ **Why did you use these colors?**

I wanted two colors that contrasted, like yellow and blue.

The original house was kind of washed-out looking, which didn't seem very interesting. So I made the side a much brighter shade of yellow to give the painting more color.

■ **What mood does the picture convey to you?**

After I was finished, I thought the house looked kind of scary. The strong lighting, the long shadows, and the low angle make it seem that way.

I think the painting takes on the point of view of a child looking up at this house. This looks to me like the kind of place where you would never see anyone around. It might be a house that people would be afraid to walk into or live in; the kind of place you'd avoid walking past after dark.

■ **Did you like it? Would you change anything about it?**

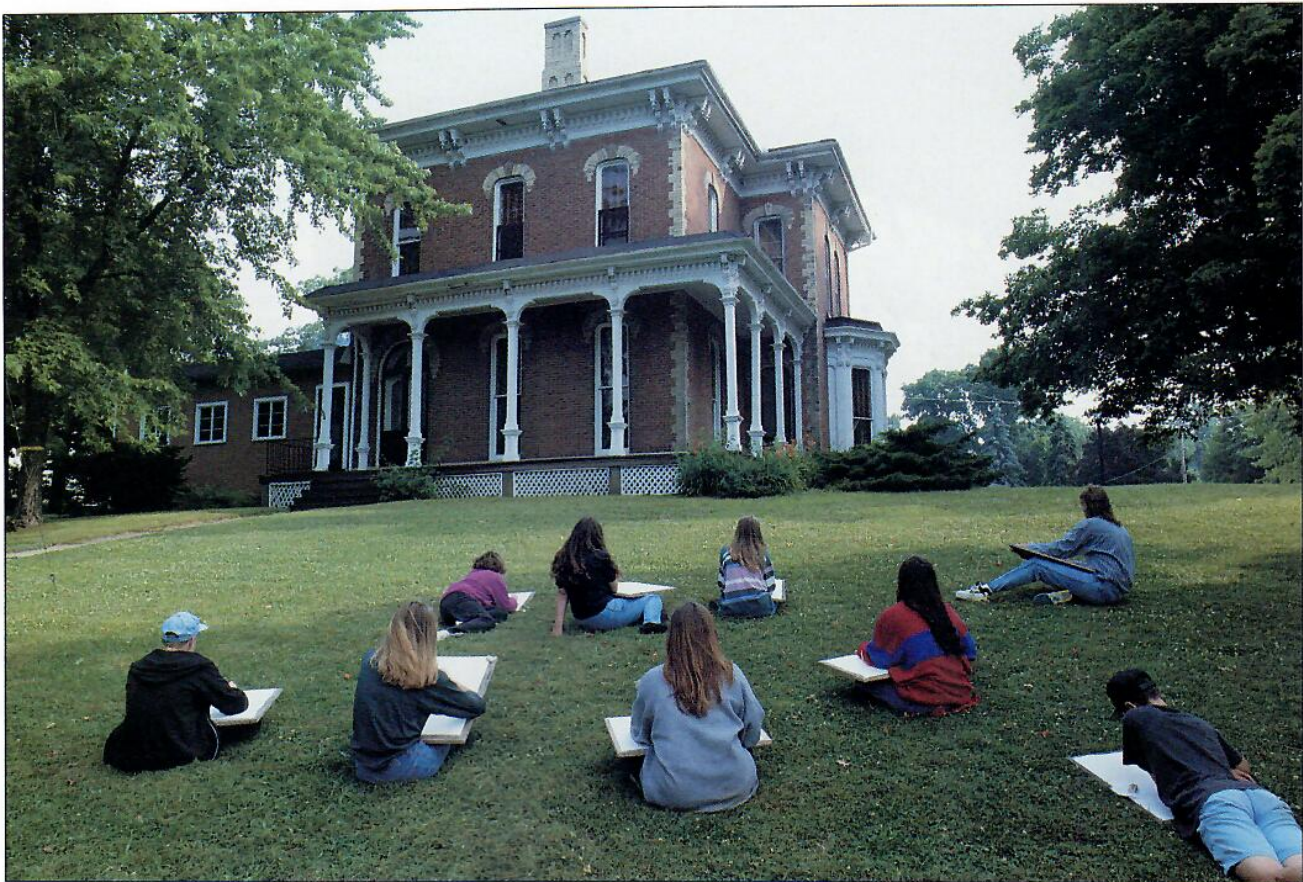
Yes. I think I would have kept the house a washed-out yellow to make it even more creepy. It might have made it older and more haunted-looking.

If I painted this picture now, I would have preferred to include more sky. I would have cropped in tighter, with less house and more sky. The only other thing I don't like about it when I look at it now is that the bottom left-hand corner seems too cluttered. I would have simplified that area.

■ **How do you feel about art as a career?**

I think if you're interested in art, you should go for it. At first I never thought of going into art. I thought I couldn't sell my paintings. But there are lots of other art-related things I can do. I think there are a lot of jobs out there for graphic artists and designers.

I also found that entering contests was very helpful. My teacher entered our paintings into a lot of competitions. It helped me to see how I was doing and how my work stacked up compared to that of other people. It's also interesting to see what kind of work everyone else is doing.



First make a number of sketches directly from the building you have chosen.

Materials

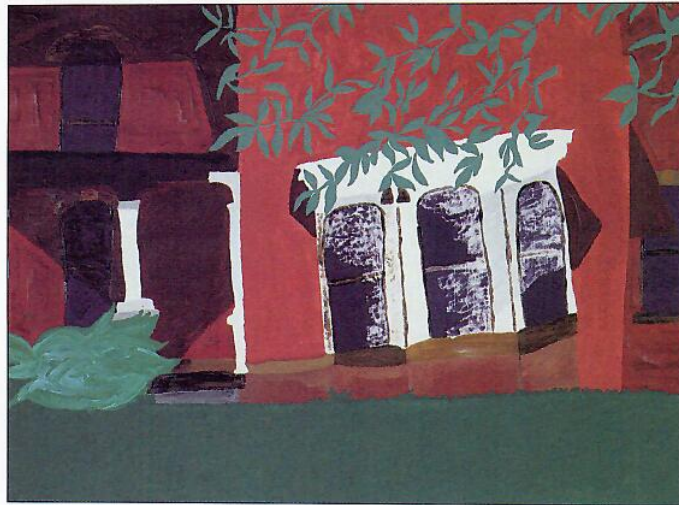
- 18" x 24" 80lb. sulfite paper
- School pencil
- Drawing board
- Masking tape
- Acrylic or tempera paint (primary; secondary; black; brown; or white)
- Variety of round/flat brushes
- Palette (old dinner plate)
- Divided container to hold paint (muffin tin)
- Toweling
- Container for water
- Plastic to cover paint
- Newspapers (to sit on outside)



You can paint the entire structure from an interesting angle, or select a detail of the house.

PAINTING PORTRAITS OF PLACES

Use an ordinary building to create a composition based on light and shadow.



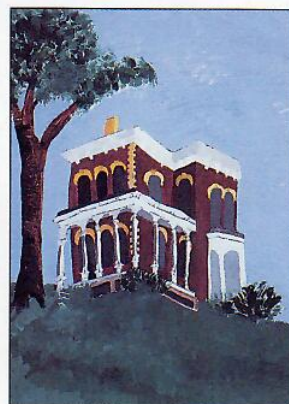
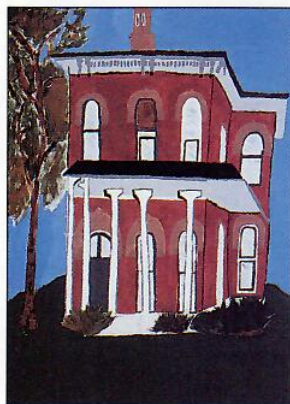
In this issue, you've seen how Edward Hopper and other artists have used light to capture the feeling of a particular place or time of day. Hopper used different kinds of compositions to convey feelings of melancholy and isolation as well as to express the hidden beauty of ordinary places. In this workshop, you'll work from a familiar building—maybe your own house or school—and do a painting that expresses your feelings about it.

Starting Out

Step 1. Find a building that appeals to you. Pick a time of day you like, and draw the building from a number of angles. Do entire building and sections.

Step 2.

Select a side, angle, or section of the building that contains sunlight and shadow. Plan your composition using your sketches to guide you.



Step 3.

Put colors on palette. Use *tints* (add white to color) to paint sunlit areas and *shades* (add black) to paint shadows. *Complementary color pairs* (red/green; blue/orange; yellow/purple) will add to a feeling of isolation. *Related colors* (red/orange/yellow; green/blue/purple) create a warm, calming feeling. Paint large, flat areas first, then details and highlights.



Some Solutions

What feeling do you want to express about the building you've chosen? Will your painting show loneliness, melancholy, and isolation like those by Edward Hopper, or does your building bring up other feelings you'd like to express? At what time of day will the lighting be most appropriate—the soft light of dawn; the harsh sunlight of midday; or the long shadows of evening? From what angle will you view your building—looking up from a low angle; looking down from a high angle; or looking from eye level? Will you use trees, bushes, or other objects to frame your composition? Will you crop tightly in on one area or detail? **Horizontals and verticals** will produce a calm feeling; **strong diagonals** give a sense of action.

"I'm trying to paint the beauty of our American architecture with its fantastic roofs, its bright colors, and its delicate harmonies of faded paint."

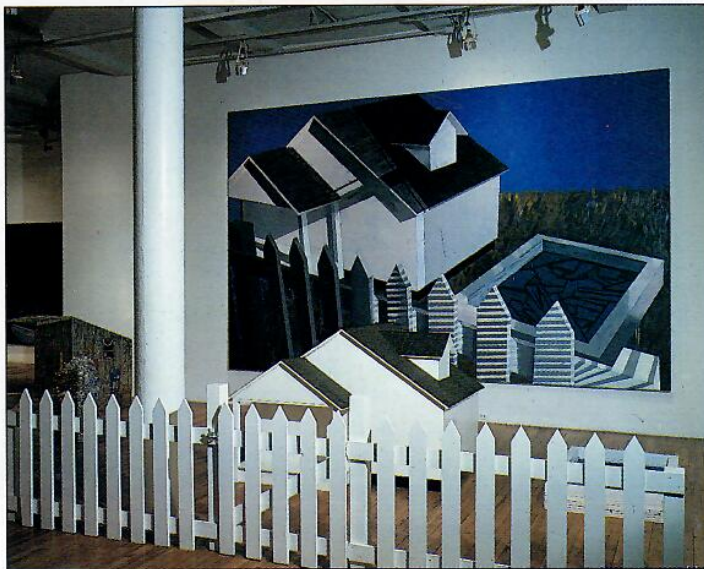
—EDWARD HOPPER

Prepared by Ned J. Nesti, Jr.,
Morrison (IL) High School.
Assisted by Sara Domdey. Photos by
Larry Gregory.

Like Edward Hopper, these two contemporary American artists create moods through dramatic lighting.

Jennifer Bartlett paints "portraits" of her three-dimensional constructions and exhibits them both together.

Jennifer Bartlett, b. 1941. *White House*, 1985. Construction and painting. Saatchi Collection, London. Photo: Paula Cooper Gallery



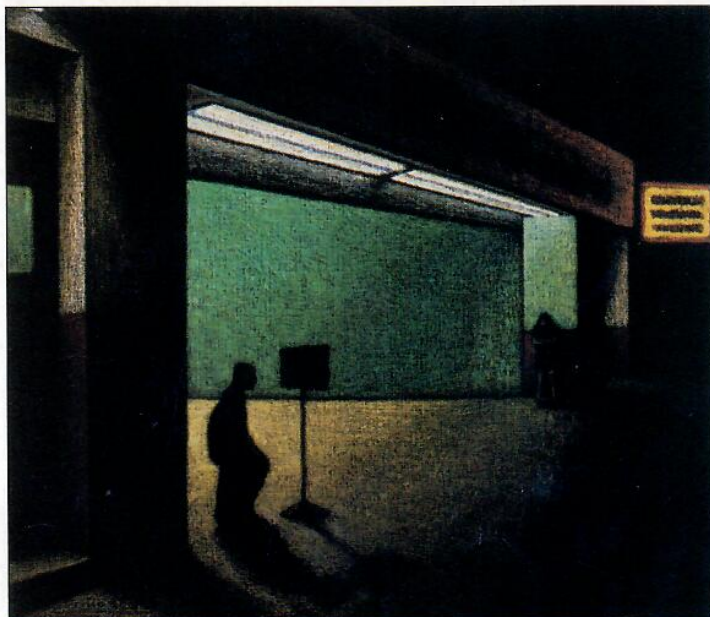
Multiple Points of View

Contemporary American artist Jennifer Bartlett combines small, three-dimensional houses or boats with two-dimensional "portraits" of these structures. Does *White House* (below) re-

mind you of some of the Edward Hopper paintings you have seen in this issue? Bartlett uses contrasts of light and shadow to create a dramatic effect. Her painting of a house and picket fence "mirrors" the structures placed in front of it. The artist uses simple, geometric shapes of light and dark. The bright, white shapes give both the painting and the construction a light, airy feeling. Bartlett has painted the scene from a high angle, as if looking down. Part of the fence in the lower left corner of the painting is in deep shadow. The construction can be seen from several points of view, as the viewer moves around it. The painted scene is flooded by bright sunlight. Compare this sunlight to the artificial, indoor light that illuminates the three-dimensional scene in the foreground.

Night Scenes

Like Edward Hopper, Chicago-born artist Jane Dickson captures the "feeling of night" in



many of her paintings. The artist has commented that many of her works are "about futility, or hopelessness."

We can almost smell the stale car exhaust when we look at Dickson's painting *Green Garage* (left). The huge, dimly lit parking garage has a hazy, poisonous look to it. This work depicts the loneliness and isolation in the midst of a large city, just as many of Hopper's works do. Dickson contrasts darkness with the artificial light that shines from within the garage. Muted, "sickly" colors give the garage a sinister, eerie feeling. A shadowy, solitary figure lurks by the door. We can't make out his or her facial expression. Is this someone who is afraid to be standing alone in this darkened garage? Or should we be afraid of this person?

Would you like to walk alone into the *Green Garage*? What gives it an eerie feeling?

Jane Dickson b. 1952. *Green Garage*, 1983. Oil stick, 66" x 74 1/4". Brooke Alexandra Gallery, NY, NY.