



## HOPPER

12 June to 16 September 2012

Curators: Tomàs Llorens and Didier Ottinger

The Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Réunion des musées nationaux de France are presenting the exhibition *Hopper*, to be shown first in Madrid then in Paris. It brings together the **largest and most ambitious selection of works by the US artist ever to be shown in Europe**, with loans from major museums and institutions including the MoMA and the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, in addition to various private collections and with a particularly generous loan from the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. The latter is sending 14 works from the Bequest of Josephine N. Hopper, the artist's wife. The exhibition has also benefited from the collaboration of the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Within the context of Europe, Hopper is one of the best known and most highly appreciated American painters. Despite this, however, his works have only been seen here in public exhibitions on a limited number of occasions. With the aim of rectifying this situation and of bringing his work to the attention of a wider public, two major cultural institutions of particular importance for the artist and his work have joined forces. The Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza houses the most significant collection of Hopper's works outside the United States, while in the case of the Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century French painting were key reference points for the start of Hopper's career.

Curated by Tomàs Llorens (Honorary Director of the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza) and Didier Ottinger (Associate Director of the MNAM/Centre Pompidou), the exhibition include 73 works in Madrid. It offers an analysis of the artist's work structured into two principal sections. The first open with Hopper's time in the studio of Robert Henri at the New York School of Art and cover the years of his training, with works from around 1900 to 1924 that start to reveal his particular and distinctive style. Paintings, drawings, prints and watercolours are displayed alongside various works by other artists including Henri, Félix Vallotton, Walter Sickert, Albert Marquet and Edgar Degas in a dialogue that recreates the one that existed between Hopper and these artists at the time. The second section focuses on Hopper's mature work and is arranged thematically in order to emphasise the most frequently recurring themes and motifs in his work, while also maintaining a chronological flow.

### Modern Realism and Americanism, key attributes of Hopper's work

Despite being an extremely popular and seemingly accessible painter, in the opinion of the exhibition's two curators Hopper's works are among the most complex phenomena in 20<sup>th</sup>-century art.

Illustrations, Edward Hopper, from left to right: *Self-portrait*, 1925-1930. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest; *Morning Sun*, 1952. Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Howald Fund Purchase; *New York Corner* or *Corner Saloon*, 1913. Private collection. Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco and Martha Parrish & James Reinish, Inc., New York.

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Hopper (Nyack, 1882 - New York, 1967) was one of the key figures within 20<sup>th</sup>-century realism although he worked for many years as an illustrator, totally ignored by the general public and critics. He sold his first work, *Sailing Boat* (1911), in 1913 and the second, *The Mansard Roof*, to the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1923. It was not until the following year, at the age of 43, that he enjoyed the success of his first exhibition at the Rehn Gallery in New York and was thus able to devote himself fully to art. The Great Depression did not prevent major American museums and collectors from acquiring his work from this point onwards. In 1930 *House by the Railroad* (1925) was the first work to enter the future collection of the recently inaugurated MoMA in New York, donated by the celebrated collector Stephen Clark, one of the greatest champions of Hopper's work. Three years later, in 1933, the Museum exhibited more than 70 works in the first major retrospective of Hopper's career with loans from all over America. In the space of less than a decade Hopper thus passed from being almost unknown to become one of the most highly esteemed living artists in the USA.



Edward Hopper, *House by the Railroad*, 1925. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Given anonymously, 1930

Americanism and realism were key aspects of Hopper's work from the outset and his paintings offered a faithful portrait of America at the time, focusing on its most modern aspects but without any element of idealisation and presenting reality in a simplified manner. While Hopper painted some landscapes and outdoor scenes, most of his works are located in public places such as bars, hotels, stations and on trains. These are almost empty settings with pronounced contrasts of light and shade that emphasise the solitude and drama of modern existence.

### 1. The Early Years



Félix Vallotton. *Femme cousant dans un intérieur*, 1905. Ville de Troyes, Collections nationales Pierre et Denise Levy

In Robert Henri's studio Hopper absorbed a modern realism that represented a break from the prevailing academicism. His earliest works clearly reveal the relationship between his art and the American tradition pursued by Henri and Winslow Homer, who portrayed early 20<sup>th</sup>-century American society. In 1906 Hopper moved to Paris where he remained for almost a year and to where he would return on subsequent occasions. Spending time in Paris was regarded as almost compulsory for American artists from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Contact with Impressionism laid the way for Hopper to develop a particular approach to light and sensuality that would become key characteristics of his work throughout his career. In his works of this period he depicted the house where he lived on rue de Lille and its immediate surroundings. These images are to be seen in the present exhibition alongside others by the European artists who influenced him such as Albert Marquet, Walter Sickert and Félix Vallotton.

On his return to the USA, Hopper found himself obliged to work as an **illustrator** for professional publications and in advertising, an activity he considered degrading but one that he tried to adapt to his artistic vocation. At this point he discovered the narrative potential of the image and also improved his technique, both of which soon became evident in his painting. Many of the subjects on which he would subsequently focus, such as leisure activities, popular spectacles and events and office life, have their direct precedents in the drawings that he produced for these publications although the results were radically different: while his illustrations were positive images that appealed to consumerism and which depicted enjoyable leisure activities, his canvases expressed the apathy, drama and solitude of the characters to be seen in them.

Hopper's discovery of **printmaking** marks the first significant step in the evolution of his work. Despite the limited number of etchings that he produced, their format and technique - which locate them mid-way between the multiple image characteristic of commercial illustrations and the unique nature of a canvas - make them crucial to his output. In his etchings Hopper emphasised the contrast between black and white, using the whitest paper and the blackest inks available. Solitary figures, as in *Evening Wind* (1921), imposing buildings, such as *The Lonely House* (1922), and striking compositional formats, as in *Night Shadows* (1921), all represent the first appearance of motifs that would subsequently recur in his work.



Edward Hopper. *Marty Welch's House*, 1928. Private Collection, Courtesy Guggenheim, Asher Associates

Hopper produced his first **watercolours** in 1923 in the coastal town of Gloucester (Massachusetts). Most of them depict the town's Victorian houses, as in *Abbot's House* (1926) and *Marty Welch's House* (1928). This was a subject with enormous dramatic potential due to the interplay of light and shadow on the buildings' façades. Hopper's discovery of this technique marks the second key moment in the evolution of his style.

## 2. The Mature period



Edward Hopper, *Room in New York*, 1932. Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska- Lincoln, - UNL - F.M. Hall Collection

From 1925 onwards Hopper's work reveals its full formal and poetic power. His unique style had already manifested itself in *House by the Railroad*, a work on which the critic Lloyd Goodrich wrote: "Without aiming to be anything more than a simple and direct portrait of any ugly house, it manages to be one of the most compelling and moving manifestations of realism that has been seen to date."

The chronology of Hopper's paintings during his mature period reveals the key moments in the development of the major themes in his work. These themes include city life (*From Williamsburg Bridge*, 1928), intimacy, isolation and melancholy (*Hotel Room*, 1931; *Room in New York*, 1932), the approach of troubled times (*Ground Swell*, 1939), and the complexity of human relations (*Summer in the City*, 1949).

Most of Hopper's canvases depict scenes of daily life in the United States; American themes that interested his fellow citizens and ones that focused on modern life. At first sight they might seem to be extremely simple compositions but closer attention reveals a highly meditated approach to compositions that almost always involve an implicit narrative.

In these scenes Hopper presents the figures alone or as couples or groups in which each one is isolated from the others with seemingly no communication between them. In *Hotel Room in New York* (1932), for example, there are two figures but while the man is reading the newspaper the woman on the other side of the table looks absently at a piano. Each is isolated in their own world.



Edward Hopper, *New York Pavements*, 1924 or 1925. Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA; Gift of Walter P. Chrysler Jr.



Edward Hopper. *Four Lane Road*, 1956. Private Collection

In addition to figure compositions, architecture was another favoured subject. On some occasions Hopper focused on isolated buildings such as the above-mentioned *House by the Railroad*, while on others the building is part of the urban context, as in *The City* (1927) and *Manhattan Bridge Loop* (1928). In this second type of composition Hopper looked for a way to make the building or structure stand out from the rest.

The use of light is one of the most distinctive, characteristic and recurring features of Hopper's work: "perhaps the most powerful and personal of Hopper's expressive devices", in the words of Alfred H. Barr, director of the MoMA between 1929 and 1943. Sunlight during the day or electric light at night enter through the windows and illuminate the

scene, modelling each detail in the canvas. This is the theme of more than half of Hopper's final twenty paintings, including *Morning in the City* (1944), in which a woman sunbathes naked in the morning light, *Conference at Night* (1949), bathed in neon light that enters from the outside, and *Morning Sun* (1952), in which the woman seems to be looking for something in the beam of light that falls on her as she sits in bed.

### Edward Hopper, Film and Modern Life

Internacional Symposium, 19 to 22 July

Hopper's well-known interest in film and his influence on numerous filmmakers of his own time and later have encouraged the organisation of an international symposium in conjunction with the exhibition, to be held in Madrid from 19 to 22 June. Entitled *Edward Hopper, Film and Modern Life*, it will benefit from the participation of leading experts in the worlds of film and art who will focus on the interesting relationship between Hopper, film and modern life from a broad cultural perspective. The symposium will be structured in the form of lectures and round tables and will include the projection of documentaries and full-length films. Directors such as Isabel Coixet and Carlos Rodríguez, directors of photography such as Juan Ruiz Anchía, Ed Lachman and experts in Film History such as Jean-Loup Bourget, Jean Foubert will take part in these sessions alongside artist such as Brian O'Doherty, art historians such as Erika Lee Doss, Valeriano Bozal and the exhibition's two curators, Tomàs Llorens and Didier Ottinger, among numerous other participants.

Within the context of this encounter, the final room in the exhibition has been transformed into a film set in which the American filmmaker Ed Lachmann has produced a recreation of Hopper's work *Morning Sun* (1952). The installation, which will be open for the entire period of the exhibition, comprises a three-dimensional reproduction of the scene in the painting, revealing Hopper's use of cinematographic devices. It also investigates his images' ability to connect with the viewer's thoughts and emotions in order to create a visual narrative that is strikingly close to film. Visitors will become involved in this experience, which takes the form of a fascinating dialogue between Hopper's influence on film and its influence on his work.



Edward Hopper. *Study for Morning Sun*, (1952) Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Josephine N. Hopper Bequest

## Film Cycle

23 July to 1 September

The day after the symposium ends the Museum will present a cycle of films with a programme inspired by the work of Hopper and his influence on filmmaking. Titles include *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932), *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) *The Eclipse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962), *Badlands* (Terrence Malik, 1973), *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986), *Drifting Clouds* (Aki Kaurismäki, 1996), *Road to Hell* (Sam Mendes, 2002) and *Mi vida sin mí* (Isabel Coixet, 2002), which will be shown in the Museum's Auditorium in the original version with subtitles in Spanish. More than 20 films will be shown during this event, which takes place on Fridays and Saturdays from 23 July to 1 September. Free entry until all seats filled.

## The Terra Foundation for American Art

For its two presentations in Madrid and Paris the exhibition *Hopper* has benefited from the collaboration of the Terra Foundation for American Art, an institution dedicated to fostering exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States for national and international audiences. Recognizing the importance of experiencing original works of art, the foundation provides opportunities for interaction and study, beginning with the presentation and growth of its own art collection in Chicago. To further cross-cultural dialogue on American art, the foundation supports and collaborates on innovative exhibitions, research, and educational programs. Implicit in such activities is the belief that art has the potential both to distinguish cultures and to unite them.

## EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Title: *Hopper*

Organisers: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza and Rmn - Grand Palais (Paris)

Dates and venues: Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 12 June to 16 September 2012. Paris, Rmn - Grand Palais, 10 October 2012 to 28 January 2013

Curators: Tomàs Llorens, Honorary Director of the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, and Didier Ottinger, Associate Director of the MNAM/Centre Pompidou

Coordinator: Leticia de Cos, Curatorial Department, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza

Number of works: 73

Publications: catalogue, in Spanish

Parallel activities: International symposium, *Edward Hopper, Film and Modern Life*, 19 to 22 June. Film Cycle, 23 July to 1 September.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

### Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza:

Address: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza. Paseo del Prado 8, 28014, Madrid. [www.museothyssen.org](http://www.museothyssen.org)

Opening times: Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10am to 11pm. Mondays and Sundays, 10am to 7pm. (Except Monday 20 August that the Museum is closed) Ticket desks close half an hour before visitors must leave the galleries

**Ticket prices:**

Temporary exhibition:

- General ticket: 10 Euros
- Reduced price ticket: 6 Euros for visitors aged over 65, pensioners, students with proof of status and Large Families
- Free entry: children aged under 12 and officially unemployed Spanish citizens

Temporary exhibition + Permanent Collection:

- General ticket: 15 Euros
- Reduced price ticket: 8 Euros
- Free entry: children aged under 12 and officially unemployed Spanish citizens

Pre-booked tickets available at the Museum's ticket desks, on its website and on tel: 902 760 511

More information: [www.museothyssen.org](http://www.museothyssen.org)

Audioguide: available in various languages

**PRESS INFORMATION**

<http://www.museothyssen.org/microsites/prensa/2012/Hopper/index.html>