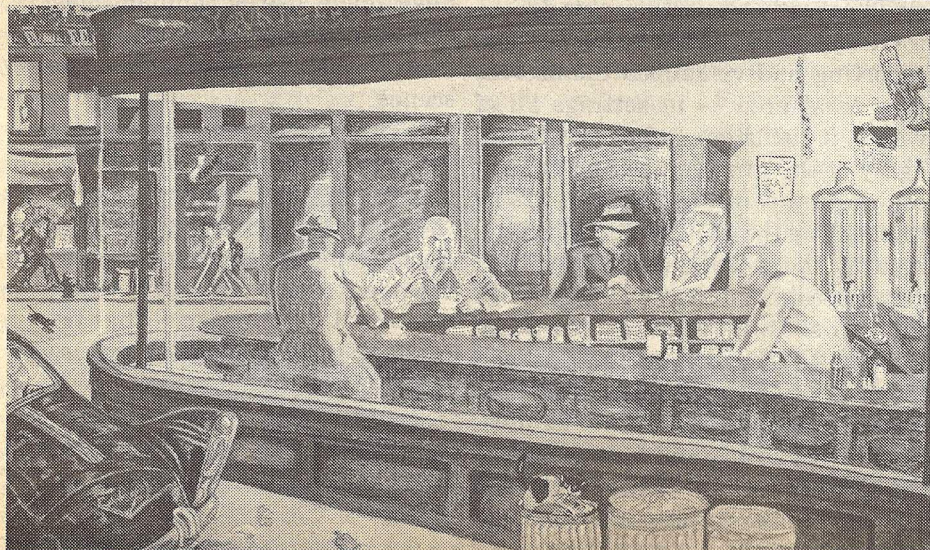


ART TIMES

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"Nighthawks Revisited" Red Grooms (1980) Colored Pencil on Paper

By GAIL LEVIN

DURING THE EARLY 1960s, at the end of his remarkable career, the realist painter Edward Hopper (1882-1967) cynically remarked of artists in general: "Ninety per cent of them are

a song based on the artist's painting *Western Motel*. At the 1980 New York retrospective, I found Richard Diebenkorn studying Hopper's compositions closely.

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Edward Hopper and Contemporary Artists

As early as 1969, Chicago artist Roger Brown was inspired to compose his painting *Puerto Rican Wedding* based on *Nighthawks* of 1942, Hopper's much-loved painting in the Chicago Art Institute. While Brown did not borrow Hopper's overall composition, he did emulate the nocturnal view looking in on an illuminated all-night diner.

Nighthawks, Hopper's most famous work, has also appeared reconstructed and animated by choreographers, as well as replicated in films and altered for humor in cartoons and greeting cards. By now we are used to seeing Santa and his reindeer or a group of dogs ensconced at Hopper's familiar all-night diner. In Red

realism, an association that Hopper rejected, feeling that he had evolved beyond his teachers Robert Henri and John Sloan and his classmates such as George Bellows and Glenn Coleman.

Austrian painter, Gottfried Helnwein, known for his portraits, painted a watercolor after *Nighthawks* in 1987 that he titled *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* and later turned into a popular poster. Instead of Hopper's characters, Helnwein included Elvis Presley, James Dean, Humphrey Bogart, and Marilyn Monroe. Although Hopper painted *Nighthawks* in 1942, Helnwein clearly identifies the composition with the mood of the 1950s and the tragic fate of the decade's best-

By GAIL LEVIN

DURING THE EARLY 1960s, at the end of his remarkable career, the realist painter Edward Hopper (1882-1967) cynically remarked of artists in general: "Ninety per cent of them are forgotten ten minutes after they're dead." If Hopper expected this sorry fate for himself, he would certainly be amazed by the enthusiastic response his work elicits today among both the general public and contemporary artists.

Considered today to be the major American realist painter of the twentieth century, Hopper, more than any of his contemporaries, captured the alienation so identified with modern life. His work is admired not only across America, but in Britain, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, and Australia, where exhibitions of his work have been enthusiastically received by large audiences. Internationally, poets, playwrights, novelists, composers, choreographers, film directors, as well as painters and sculptors, have paid homage to Hopper. In Germany, he has been called a cult figure.

One of the joys of my own research and writing about Hopper and his work has involved my dialogue with artists who admire his work for a variety of reasons. I have found Hopper's fans when I least expected it. For example, the abstract sculptor, Christopher Wilmarth, who loved Hopper's work for its light, even wrote

Western Motel. At the 1980 New York retrospective, I found Richard Diebenkorn studying Hopper's compositions closely.

Although many artists have felt the influence of Hopper's work, it was not until the 1970s that direct references to his work began to appear. These were, of course, less pointed than most of the appropriations we see today. Hopper, who died just before his eighty-fifth birthday in 1967, had not yet become an American icon. Exposure given to Hopper's work in the 1980 retrospective exhibition seems to have enhanced both the level of attention paid to Hopper and the artist's prices.

Demonstrating a diversity of style, from conceptual to expressionist, the works of contemporary artists who refer to Hopper illuminate the universal appeal of his art. Hopper's work has captured the attention not only of American artists, but also of artists such as France's Jacques Monory, England's Victor Burgin, Germany's Dieter Hacker, Austria's Gottfried Helnwein, and Japan's Ushio Shinohara. Among the many American painters referring to Hopper are Roger Brown, Red Grooms, Greg Constantine, George Deem, and Mark Kostabi. American sculptors like Claudia DeMonte, Chris Unterseher, Susan Leopold, Bruce Houston, and Jim Barden have translated favorite Hopper images into three-dimensional works.

phers, as well as replicated in films and altered for humor in cartoons and greeting cards. By now we are used to seeing Santa and his reindeer or a group of dogs ensconced at Hopper's familiar all-night diner. In Red Grooms' drawing *Nighthawks Revisited* of 1980, he poked light-hearted fun at Hopper's most famous image, adding a car, litter, cats, and figures, including two representing Grooms and Hopper to the 1942 composition. While Hopper is depicted sitting at the counter, Grooms has given himself the role of the short-order cook behind the counter. Grooms' inclusion of the garbage cans in the foreground suggests that he considers Hopper an adherent of early twentieth-century "Ashcan School"

James Dean, Humphrey Bogart, and Marilyn Monroe. Although Hopper painted *Nighthawks* in 1942, Helnwein clearly identifies the composition with the mood of the 1950s and the tragic fate of the decade's best-loved American celebrities.

In 1971, a French painter, Jacques Monory, painted *Homage a Edward Hopper*, a much more direct quotation from Hopper's 1925 painting *House by the Railroad*. Monory explained: "Hopper's art is part of my fascination with 'romans noirs,' thrillers, and other expressions of contemporary solitude."

In his photo-text piece of 1985-86, the British artist, Victor Burgin, examined Edward Hopper's *Office at*
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Edward Hopper

Continued from Page 1

Night, a classic painting of 1940 featuring a secretary and her male boss, in postmodernist terms deriving from semiotics, psychoanalysis and feminism and defined the image as "the organization of sexuality for capitalism."

For the Japanese artist, Ushio Shinohara, Hopper's work epitomized America as he experienced it after arriving in New York in 1969. Shinohara explained that for him "Hopper is like Haiku — small words but big meaning." Feeling the same isolation in coming to the United States that he found in Hopper, he produced a number of drawings such as *Samurai Take a Walk to Hopper's Gas Station* which combine brilliantly colored ink with collage of shiny colored paper and glitter. Shinohara's colossal screen painting, *Seven Hoppers in Bermuda Island* of 1987 contains multiple references to Hopper's work recast through the drama of Kabuki and tea ceremonies.

Mark Kostabi, who borrows his images everywhere from old masters to contemporary media, has produced a number of paintings with compositions lifted from Hopper, but updated by the inclusion of television sets, tele-

phones, hulking skyscrapers and his own faceless humanoids.

The appropriation of Hopper's work has not been limited to the fine arts. There have been many newspaper and magazine cartoons pertaining to his work, as well as a group of commercial advertisements, posters, and greeting cards that use his images. There are numerous films and novels referring to his work, poems based on his paintings, as well as examples of his influence in the performing arts including dance, music, and theater. These artists and their works help us to grasp some of the many levels on which to appreciate Hopper's art.

(Gail Levin is Associate Professor of Art at Baruch College, The City University of New York. A noted authority on the work of Edward Hopper, she is presently completing work on a critical biography of the artist. Most recently, she has curated: **HOMAGE TO EDWARD HOPPER: QUOTING THE AMERICAN REALIST**, Baruch College Art Gallery, 135 East 22nd Street, New York City, November 3 - December 23, 1988. Hours: Monday-Friday, 12-5 p.m. and Thursdays until 7 p.m.)

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ART TIMES ??

Calendar

Because our Calendar of Events is prepared a month in advance, dates, times & events are subject to change. Please call ahead to insure accuracy.

Thursday, December 1

RIDGE STRING QUARTET The Frick Collection, 1 East 70th St, NYC (212) 288-0700, 5:45 pm Charge

"ROUND AND ROUND THE GARDEN" Capital Repertory Co., Market Theatre, North Pearl Street, Albany (518) 462-4534 8 pm charge

'THE CHRISTMAS COLLECTION' WORKS BY ARTIST CAROL COLLETTE, ROBERT KIPNISS & MORE Greenhut Galleries, Stuyvesant Plaza, Albany (518) 482-1984 10 AM - 9:30 pm free (thru Dec 31)

THE FIGURE SPEAKS Edith C. Blum Art Institute of Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson (914) 758-7144 12 pm - 5 pm free (through Dec. 31)

Friday, December 2

19TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL The Palisades Interstate Park Commission, Bear Mountain State Park (914) 786-2701 (thru Jan 1)

19TH CENTURY FRENCH WATERCOLORS & DRAWINGS AT THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM The Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Parkway, B'klyn (718) 638-5000 Charge (thru Feb 20, 89)

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE & BAROQUE CRECHE DISPLAY The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 5th & 82nd, NYC (212) 879-5500 Charge (thru Jan 15, 89)

COMMUNITY PLAYBACK THEATRE (PARTICIPATING IMPROV.) Community Playback Theatre, Boughton Place, Kisor Rd, Highland, NY (914) 691-8700 8pm charge

EXHIBITION: SET DESIGNS IN PROFESSIONAL THEATER Berkshire Artisans, Pittsfield Community Arts Center, 28 Renne Ave, Pittsfield MA (413) 499-9348 7pm free (thru Dec 30)

GIFTS TO THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM FROM A. LIBERMAN Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Ave, NYC (212) 360-3555 Charge (thru Jan 29, 89)

HUDSON VALLEY CIRCUS CONCERT BAND, UPAC, 601 B'way, Kingston (914) 339-6088 8pm. Charge.

LECTURE: MASTERS & MINOR MASTERS: COLLECTING DRAWINGS OF QUALITY Whitney Museum of Art, Fairfield County, One Champion Plaza, Stamford, CT (203) 358-7652 6:30pm Free

PERPETUAL MOTIF: THE ART OF MAN RAY Smithsonian Institution, Nat'l Museum of American Art, 8th & G Sts, Wash. D.C. (202-357-2627 Free (thru Feb 20, 89)

"REDWING" The New Works Theatre Group, Inc., Small theatre at Capital District Psychiatric Center, 75 New Scotland Ave., Albany 8pm Charge

"ROUND AND ROUND THE GARDEN" Capital Repertory Co., Market Theatre, North Pearl Street, Albany (518) 462-4534 8 pm charge

THE 17TH ANNUAL WBAI HOLIDAY CRAFTS FAIR, WBAI Holiday Crafts Fair, Columbia University's Ferris Booth Hall, 115th St. & Broadway, Manhattan, NY (212) 695-4465 5pm - 9pm Saturdays & Sundays from Noon - 7pm, (thru Dec. 4)

"THE NUTCRACKER" EMPIRE STATE BALLET Paramount Center for the Arts, 1008 Brown Street, Peekskill (914) 739-2333 8pm charge

WRITER'S COMMUNITY WRITERS IN RESIDENCE WETHERIDGE KNIGHT & STEVE STERN The Writer's Voice, West Side YMCA, 5 W. 63rd St, NYC (212) 787-6557 8pm Charge