

# HOPPER



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*Mark Strand*

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## **Hopper** Mark Strand

Now in rich color, thirty of American painter Edward Hopper's masterpieces with critiques from acclaimed poet Mark Strand. Strand deftly illuminates the work of the frequently misunderstood American painter, whose enigmatic paintings—of gas stations, storefronts, cafeterias, and hotel rooms—number among the most powerful of our time.

In brief but wonderfully compelling comments accompanying each painting, the elegant expressiveness of Strand's language is put to the service of Hopper's visual world. The result is a singularly illuminating presentation of the work of one of America's best-known artists. Strand shows us how the formal elements of the paintings—geometrical shapes pointing beyond the canvas, light from unseen sources—locate the viewer, as he says, "in a virtual space where the influence and availability of feeling predominate."

An unforgettable combination of prose and painting in their highest forms, this book is a must for poetry and art lovers alike.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **Hopper Details**

Date : Published November 13th 2001 by Knopf (first published 1994)

ISBN : 9780375709715

Author : Mark Strand

Format : Paperback 80 pages

Genre : Art, Poetry, Nonfiction, Writing, Essays, Criticism

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## From Reader Review Hopper for online ebook

### **Margie says**

Loved it. Fabulous look at the meaning and intent of Hooper's paintings. Helps answer that nagging question: "what IS it about Hopper's paintings that stops you in your tracks and demands you to look, think, & feel?"

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### **SmarterLilac says**

Nice. Mark Strand has articulated a lot of things I've always wanted to say about Hopper myself. I especially like the attention he pays to the geometric elements of the paintings, as well as to Hopper's odd way of depicting people--like people who's 'parts are over' and who still somehow have to go on anyway, 'keeping themselves company.' Plus, I had to appreciate the inclusion of a couple of Hopper's I'm not familiar with, including *Seven A.M.*, and *Pennsylvania Coal Town*. It's always fun for a Hopper fan to find something 'new' within his work.

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### **Stephen says**

Beautifully printed, but this seemed like a pot-boiler for poet Mark Strand and his publisher. I wanted more depth from a Pulitzer Prize-winner. Strand's commentary was pretty bare-bones, which might mimic Hopper's superficially laconic paintings about being impelled to move on but wanting to linger. While that's a quality I love in Hopper, I disliked it in Strand's prose. He seemed unwilling to take much of a stand or tell us a story, preferring to give us a fairly dry gallery talk about geometry (not unimportant or uninteresting, but I wanted some more narrative insight). At one point, Strand even seems deliberately evasive and non-committal, writing bluntly that no imaginary story can compete with the beauty of Hopper's doomed American houses. Could be true, but I wish he'd tried, given it a poetic jab, just for argument's sake. I had plenty of thoughts about the significance of structure in Hopper while reading Strand, so it's not that the book doesn't provoke thought, but I'm not the Pulitzer Prize winner. I wanted more meat and fewer art gallery hors-d'oeuvres.

John Updike blurbs on the back that this is the best commentary on Edward Hopper -- why couldn't I get over the impression that it was a weekend journal-writing activity? Overall, Strand's *Hopper* didn't satisfy the ache for more contact with these elusive, luminous, mute, hungry things in front of me (and perhaps that's a good thing, hunger for more Hopper is the place to be.) Though the paintings, of course, are always worthwhile.

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### **Rick says**

Thirty-two short chapters, each but the first and last a commentary on a single Hopper painting, or in rare cases, several paintings, comprise this engaging monograph by the American poet Mark Strand. He concentrates on form and composition and provides an insightful tour of Edward Hopper's work. He finds that Hopper uses shapes in composition to convey the "satisfactions and misgivings" having to do with change in America. "Looking at Nighthawks," he writes, "we are suspended between contradictory imperatives—one, governed by the trapezoid, that urges us forward, and the other, governed by the image of a light place in a dark city, that urges us to stay." Strand mixes questions and observations, calls attentions to Hopper's strange juxtapositions and anomalies. About "People in the Sun" he observes, "Nature and civilization almost appear to be staring each other down." About "Western Motel," a painting that shows a well-dressed woman sitting on a bed staring back at the viewer, the room's wide window behind her, curtain fully drawn open, the nose of a car visible with low, abstractly rolling hills in the background, he first notes that the woman is the only one of Hopper's people who looks back at the viewer—and this slim volume has scores of individuals in rooms, public places and exteriors all portrayed candidly looking everywhere but back at the viewer—then observes that it is as if the woman is posing for a photograph and the viewer is the photographer (and companion to the woman?). "We are the real reason everything seems to stop in the picture. We are the invisible force within the painting, and we are the occasion it honors. This may be the reason we do not feel excluded. We are not being urged on. The moment is ours." Strand is thoughtful, observant, and personal in a way that is generous, sharing responses that connect with us and make his experience ours.

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### **Stefania says**

En el prefacio de este libro, Strand advierte que su propósito es corregir las interpretaciones de la obra de Hopper propuestas por otros críticos y que él considera inexactas, ya que, según afirma, «La mayor parte de lo que se ha publicado parece eludir la pregunta fundamental de por qué gente tan distinta entre sí se siente conmovida de manera similar cuando se enfrenta a la obra de este pintor», y no puedo evitar preguntarme si esto no es, precisamente, lo que tienen en común todas las obras artísticas, sean de la disciplina que sean.

El arte, además de ser una manifestación de la experiencia humana entendida en sentido amplio, es, para mí, una forma de igualarnos: cuando contemplamos una obra de esta naturaleza, y pese a que nuestras impresiones pueden ser de lo más variadas, tenemos, en mayor o menor medida, la sensación de ser intérpretes a la vez que espectadores; no solo observamos, sino que además ejercemos un juicio crítico. Esto nos lleva a afirmar que, frente a él, no cabe adoptar un rol pasivo. Necesariamente la obra de arte nos interpela, y es casi imposible permanecer indiferentes a la forma en que esta viene a modificar el (nuestro) mundo. Y ahí se hace evidente lo que plantea Strand al principio: aunque nadie la analiza desde el mismo lugar (literal y figurativo), esas diferencias devienen superficiales cuando se resuelven en el sentimiento, en la reacción común que nos provoca. Ese fenómeno es el que nos acerca, y en eso reside, a mi entender, lo fascinante de las manifestaciones artísticas.

En el caso específico de Hopper, sus pinturas -que podrían resultar simples y hasta insulsas si no son analizadas con el debido detenimiento-, se tornan complejas a medida que uno va interiorizándose en ellas. Los matices, los gestos, la luz (obsesión confesa del artista), dicen tanto o más que el resultado final. Hopper es, ante todo, su sutileza.

Strand era poeta, y parece comprender ciertos aspectos de su obra que tal vez a cualquiera de nosotros se nos podrían escapar a primera vista, como cuando sostiene que «El tiempo que pasamos con un cuadro debe incluir -si tenemos conciencia de nosotros mismos- lo que este nos revela sobre la naturaleza de la

continuidad. Los cuadros de Hopper no son vacíos en un rico proceso. Son todo lo que puede extraerse de un vacío en el que no se siente tanto la presencia de los acontecimientos de una vida como del tiempo que precede a esa vida, o que la sucede.» Por eso, y si bien el descubrimiento del gozo ante una obra de arte es una experiencia muy personal, creo que su libro constituye una buena guía para empezar a adentrarse en el universo que este pintor nos quiso regalar.

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### **David says**

Very enjoyable and insightful, though brief. Somehow, I never got a chance to read this until now, but Strand, no surprise really, whose poems I've read intimately for 25 years now, is a perfect accompaniment for Hopper's art. Strand's little essays on Hopper's more famous oil paintings are very much like Hopper's paintings themselves: spare, poetic and pitch-perfect. Bouncing between discussions of various dichotomies: narrative vs. moments, shadow vs. light, continuity vs. stillness, viewer vs. subject matter: the 32 short pieces in the book feel as if they could be the thought-provoking little museum placards posted near the actual paintings. Ultimately, Strand's gift to us is that he is able to open you to the imaginative, subtly complex world of Hopper's art, a truly American one, and for that alone it should be required reading for any of us interested in what that notion, being an American I mean, means.

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### **James Payne says**

Lacks color reproductions, social context and biographical information. Contains trapezoids, 'poetic' language. Don't believe everything Adam Gopnik tells you. But, on the whole, nice, worth reading - just don't expect anything more than what you can already see yourself.

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### **Mike Gabor says**

30 paintings of Hoppers are shown in this book along with a brief commentary by the poet, Mark Strand. I'm not an art fan but I've always enjoyed looking at Hopper's paintings. A lot of my favorites such as Nighthawks, Early Sunday Morning, The Circle Theater, are included here. My only complaint is that I wish this were a coffee table type book so the illustrations would be larger.

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### **Sigrun Hodne says**

Mark Strand opens this wonderful, slim and competent book on Hopper by saying:

*It is my contention that Hopper's paintings transcend the appearance of actuality and locate the viewer in a virtual space where the influence and availability of feeling predominate.*

Strand's short ekphrastic texts helps us create these imaginary spaces on the threshold of Hopper's art, between the painting and our own experiences.

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## **Cherylann says**

I always enjoyed Edward Hopper's work, so when I heard that a renowned poet had written a book solely on his paintings of course I picked it up. I don't want to say I was disappointed by the book, because that isn't entirely true. However, I wished that he had written more than a one to two page synopsis for each painting. Hopper's paintings lend themselves to discussion quite easily. I would have liked to see a more in depth analysis from Mark Strand, rather than what at times seemed like a shallow dive.

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That being said, Strand did prove himself to be quite competent at describing and analyzing art. His explanations of composition and presumptions of what was going on in the paintings were all very interesting and well done. I just wanted more of it.

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## **Peter Sidell says**

### **A thoughtful introduction to Hopper**

I had heard of hopper because of his painting of the people at a restaurant counter. Recently some allusions to his work in fiction prompted my curiosity and this is a good way to satisfy some of that curiosity and deepen it at the same time. The author was poet laureate in 1990. Now I need to read his work as well. I read this book as a Kindle edition on an iPad. The illustrations are adequately reproduced. Not long but thought provoking.

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## **Hamish says**

The text accompanying the images in this very small book didn't really serve much of a purpose, for me. Strand would have been better off using his much-heralded talents to pen poems about each individual work of art, thus doubling the artistic merit of the book in its entirety, instead of the simple, almost utilitarian descriptions.

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## **Jonnathan Opazo says**

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## **Peycho Kanev says**

Short, sharp and punctual. Edward Hopper is a true master. But when it comes to poets talking and writing

about painters, paintings and art in general, I prefer Charles Baudelaire and Zbigniew Herbert.

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### **Steven says**

Strand gives his reading of 30 of Hopper's paintings. In the preface he states his intent to clarify both of his own thoughts on the painting and to correct what he considers to be "misconceptions advanced by other critics." Much of Strand's focus is on Hopper's use of space and light and color, so it is a big knock on the book that, except, for the cover, all of the paintings are shown in black and white. Very unfortunate to have text discussing a painting's color scheme and to then not show it. I do think that Stand, at the end of the book, identifies one of the enduring powers of Hopper's art: "It is as if we are spectators at an event we are unable to name. We feel the presence of what is hidden, of what surely exists but is not revealed." Many of Hopper's paintings have the voyeur perspective, and rather than being realism, are actually carefully *posed* to invite viewers projections, and Strand provides one viewer's interpretation of the hidden presence.

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