

EDWARD HOPPER, A VISIONARY OF THE REALITY OF MAN TODAY

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If there exists an artist who expresses the sensations of solitude and anxiety that many of us have felt during our prolonged confinement, that is Edward Hopper.

The IOMR invites its friends and followers to view the magnificent video which accompanies this blog. A real homage to this American painter whose work represents the eternal values of Art and, in particular, of Painting.

Hopper's work embodies the ideals that every sensitive person seeks in painting, which is the visible result of two centrifugal forces converging on him, his capacity to scrutinize reality as well as listen to his inner Soul.

Hopper is so indubitably contemporary of his time that he is considered one of the painters who best represents XXth century society, employing the same resources used by the old masters whose works echo throughout all Hopper's art. In his painting we see the foreboding of Watteau, the silence of Vermeer, the introspection of Rembrandt, the adagio rhythm of Velázquez and the study of light of the Impressionists.

Hopper, like all great masters, is, above all, a thinker of his time; in him nothing is superfluous, everything has its significance, that is why he can express so clearly the evils that grip fast the individual in modern society; evils which accompany him wherever he goes, in his home, in the hotel, in the bar, in the theatre; that anxiety and inner emptiness which he feels on contemplating from his window what is outside; that depersonalization typical of a man of the masses due to his lack of interaction between himself and his environment, that absence of communication which destroys so many couples today.

But also, like the early Flemish painters, in Hopper's work, it is the objects that reveal the secret in his painting and the spirit in his personages; all of

them seem to emit an echo with a sense of foreboding which dominates the spectator. A typewriter, a letter, a book, a public advertisement, a lamp on the bedside table, a suitcase beside the sofa, the simple frame of a window opening on an urban landscape at sunset.

But no doubt the most unique feature of his work is the light. This is a force which acts like a real obsession on his artist's soul, inasmuch as it gives a special meaning to the void which equally surrounds both persons and objects, just as it isolates them within their own environment, a feature that indubitably reminds us of Velázquez.

A clear, diaphanous daylight that penetrates the interior transforming matter, giving liveliness to the tedious everyday life of an American home; an artificial light, somewhat yellowish in tone, like what may be glimpsed indiscreetly in those dwellings which fill the skyscrapers of modern cities as if they were beehives or which we notice in theatre or cinema scenes with dumbfounded spectators, frequently found in Hopper's work; an icy-cold modern neon light, like those which illuminate highway shop-windows and cafeterias, or petrol stations of American provincial cities; a light that, due to the effect of its shadows, reveals to us the silhouettes of citizens going in herds to work or the figures of workers perched on a beam enjoying a moment's rest.

Hopper's work is full of violent contrasts which thanks to his subtle way of treating them, they scarcely surprise the spectator:

The difference between nature, the sea, the wind, the sun or the light and the skyscrapers, the car, the ship, the neon lights of the advertisements, symbols of modern man, a man without a project who is awaiting an uncertain destiny.

The temporary link between the past, present and future, something always visible in the story told in Hopper's pictures which encourages us to feel a sensation of suspense connected with the action not openly described, but which the spectator intuitively imagines may occur.

The contrast between the confinement that man lives in a building imbued with a "slow movement" existence and the life of the external world that gives a halo of hope symbolized by the importance that Hopper gives to windows.

All this leads us to another of his qualities: the brevity of his pictorial description as the form chosen to transmit a message that respects the freedom of the spectator's imagination to interpret the outcome of an incomplete story represented in the picture. This explains Hopper's close connection with the cinema; the action of his painting, in particular its foreground, seems to be led forward by a camera, increasing the tension of the spectator and creating an overall feeling of suspense in the scene.

Hopper is the best example of how "objective painting", as he himself calls it, can transmit a philosophic, sociological, and social message intimately close to the heart of his time, containing a profound significance, absolutely comparable to any existentialist novel, by means of a traditional pictorial technique and a simple, attractive and universal language very far away from the experiments of the "avant garde" that convulsed XXth century art. A visual message as powerful as Banksy nowadays can transmit, but infinitely higher from an artistic point of view

Hopper represents a spirit of resistance against abstract painting, a solid outpost to which eternal art can cling in opposition to the vanguard currents of the XXth century. He is the only one in the United States who rises up against the destructive force of Pollock's abstract expressionism.

I do not wish to extend myself any further because on this occasion I only aim to instil in my readers a feeling of curiosity not only for Hopper's work but also for the originality itself of the video which I present attached, where are combined in a masterly way interviews given by Hopper himself and by his wife, as well as reproductions of his pictures, photos and films of his age, all linked together following along the way chosen by this great observer of his epoch.