

The New Criterion

Art

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Exhibition note

by [David Yezzi](#)

On "Edward Hopper" at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

"Edward Hopper"

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

September 16, 2007-January 21, 2008

Edward Hopper's paintings suffer from the same popular misconception that plagues the poems of Robert Frost: we feel that we know them. Hopper, like Frost, is a wholesome, all-American pastoralist, unfailingly accessible to the point of warm-fuzziness and quick to register pleasing, iconic images. One might think so, but look again. It took Lionel Trilling's famous birthday toast to uncover the terrifying poet beneath Frost's New England farmer façade. The National Gallery's Hopper retrospective—which ranges from early etchings and watercolors to Hopper's famous *Chop Suey* (1929) and *Nighthawks* (1942)—shows the painter as something more than a genial realist. His attractive surfaces and inviting use of color notwithstanding, something darker and considerably lonelier ...

David Yezzi is the Executive Editor of The New Criterion.

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