

WHITNEY

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PRESS RELEASE



President Barack Obama looks at the Edward Hopper paintings now displayed in the Oval Office, February 7, 2014. The paintings are *Cobb's Barns, South Truro*, top, and *Burly Cobb's House, South Truro*. (Official White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy)

Whitney Museum Loans Two Edward Hopper Paintings to The White House

NEW YORK, February 11, 2014—The Whitney Museum of American Art is delighted to announce the loan of two Edward Hopper paintings to The White House. The two paintings, *Burly Cobb's House, South Truro* and *Cobb's Barns, South Truro*, both dated 1930–1933, were installed in the Oval Office last week.

“We are pleased and honored to lend two paintings by Edward Hopper—the artist with whom the Whitney Museum of American Art is most closely identified—to The White House for display in the Oval Office,” said Adam D. Weinberg, the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney. “Edward Hopper’s history with the Whitney goes back to our roots in 1920, when he was given his first one-person exhibition at the Whitney Studio Club, forerunner to the Whitney Museum. Since the founding of the Museum in 1930, we have exhibited Hopper’s work more than any other artist and are proud to house the greatest collection of Hoppers in the world. We hope these beautiful Cape Cod landscapes will give great pleasure to President Obama and to all who see them.”

Edward Hopper (1882–1967) is universally recognized as one of the most significant artists of the twentieth century. Known primarily for the oil paintings of urban life and the American landscape that he created from the 1920s to the 1960s, Hopper subtly intertwined observations of the real with his imagination to create an aesthetic that has influenced not only painting but also popular culture, photography, and film.

Born in Nyack, New York, to a middle-class family, Hopper was artistically inclined from a young age. In 1900, after a brief stint in a school for commercial illustration, Hopper entered the New York School of Art in Manhattan, which was founded by the celebrated American painter William Merritt Chase. While there he changed his focus from illustration to painting, studying with Robert Henri, the leader of the Ashcan School, a group of artists known for their realistic depictions of contemporary American life. Despite being included in the landmark Armory Show exhibition in 1913, Hopper received little critical attention in his early years and supported himself as an illustrator for magazines and journals.

In 1920, Hopper had his first one-person exhibition at the Whitney Studio Club in Greenwich Village and was included in eight subsequent exhibitions there before it closed to make way for the Whitney Museum of American Art. On July 9, 1924, Hopper married Josephine Verstelle Nivison, a fellow painter who had also studied at the New York School of Art. By the end of the decade, he had begun to receive greater attention from critics, curators, and the public. He was included in the Museum of Modern Art’s second exhibition, *Nineteen Living Americans* (1929). When the Whitney Museum opened in 1931, Hopper’s landmark painting *Early Sunday Morning* (1930), a gift from founder Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, was among its most important early acquisitions. In 1932, his painting *Room in New York* (1932) was exhibited in the first Whitney Biennial, and his work continued to be shown in the Museum’s Biennials and Annuals throughout his career.

In 1930, Hopper and his wife began dividing their time between Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and Washington Square in New York. By this point, Hopper’s work had been presented in Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago, giving him a prominent national presence. Hopper’s three lifetime retrospectives were all held in New York—the first at the Museum of Modern Art (1933), the others at the Whitney Museum (1950 and 1964). By the time of his death in 1967, Hopper’s reputation as one of the country’s most important artists was firmly cemented. After Josephine’s death, Hopper’s artistic holdings, including *Burly Cobb’s House*, *South Truro* and *Cobb’s Barns*, *South Truro*, were bequeathed to the Museum. Because of this bequest, the Whitney Museum has more than 2,500 paintings, drawings, watercolors, and prints by Hopper in its collection, making it the world’s largest repository of works by the artist. It is also home to the Edward and Josephine Hopper Research collection in the archives of the Whitney Museum’s Frances Mulhall Achilles Library, which preserves a wide array of primary materials on Hopper’s life and career.

Arrangements for the loan of the two Hopper paintings to The White House were overseen by Dana Miller, curator of the Whitney’s permanent collection.

Burly Cobb’s House, South Truro and Cobb’s Barns, South Truro

Hopper and his wife began to spend their summers in South Truro, on Cape Cod in 1930, eventually building a house of the artist’s own design there in 1934. Although there had been important artistic communities for decades on Cape Cod, Provincetown in particular, South Truro was more rural and isolated. Solitary and introspective by nature, Hopper found the quietude of South Truro restorative. They rented a cottage they nicknamed “Bird Cage Cottage,” which was perched on a hill overlooking the farm of the local postmaster A. B. Burleigh Cobb, from whom they rented the house. Between 1930 and 1933, Hopper made a series of paintings, watercolors, and drawings of the buildings and barns on the Cobb property, exploring the structures from several angles and at different times of the day. *Burly Cobb’s House*, *South Truro* and *Cobb’s Barns*, *South Truro* feature the lush, rolling hills and open, luminous skies that attracted the Hoppers to the region. Although he worked in a figurative mode,

Hopper was always attentive to formal structure and abstract design in his work—an approach that is evident in the interlocking planes formed by the barn and outbuildings in these two paintings. Emblematic examples of his work, these paintings capture the strong sense of atmosphere and light as well as the empty stillness that characterize much of Hopper's imagery. They also demonstrate Hopper's fascination with the various forms of this country's vernacular architecture—a subject he would return to again and again, resulting in some of the most enduring images of American art.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the world's leading museum of twentieth-century and contemporary art of the United States. Focusing particularly on works by living artists, the Whitney is celebrated for presenting important exhibitions and for its renowned collection, which comprises 20,000 works by more than 2,900 artists. With a history of exhibiting the most promising and influential artists and provoking intense debate, the Whitney Biennial, the Museum's signature exhibition, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in the United States. In addition to its landmark exhibitions, the Museum is known internationally for events and educational programs of exceptional significance and as a center for research, scholarship, and conservation.

Founded by sculptor and arts patron Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1930, the Whitney was first housed on West 8th Street in Greenwich Village. The Museum relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and, in 1966, inaugurated its present home, designed by Marcel Breuer, at 945 Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side. While its vibrant program of exhibitions and events continues uptown, the Whitney is constructing a new home, designed by Renzo Piano, in downtown Manhattan. Located at the corner of Gansevoort and Washington Streets in the Meatpacking District, at the southern entrance to the High Line, the new building, which has generated immense momentum and support, will enable the Whitney to vastly increase the size and scope of its exhibition and programming space. Ground was broken in May 2011, and the new building is projected to open to the public in spring 2015.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

Edward Steichen in the 1920s and 1930s:

A Recent Acquisition

Through Feb 23, 2014

In Parts

Through March 2, 2014

2014 Whitney Biennial

March 7-May 25, 2014

Jeff Koons: A Retrospective

June 27-October 19, 2014

The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. General admission: \$20. Full-time students and visitors ages 19–25 and 62 & over: \$16. Visitors 18 & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6–9 p.m. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.