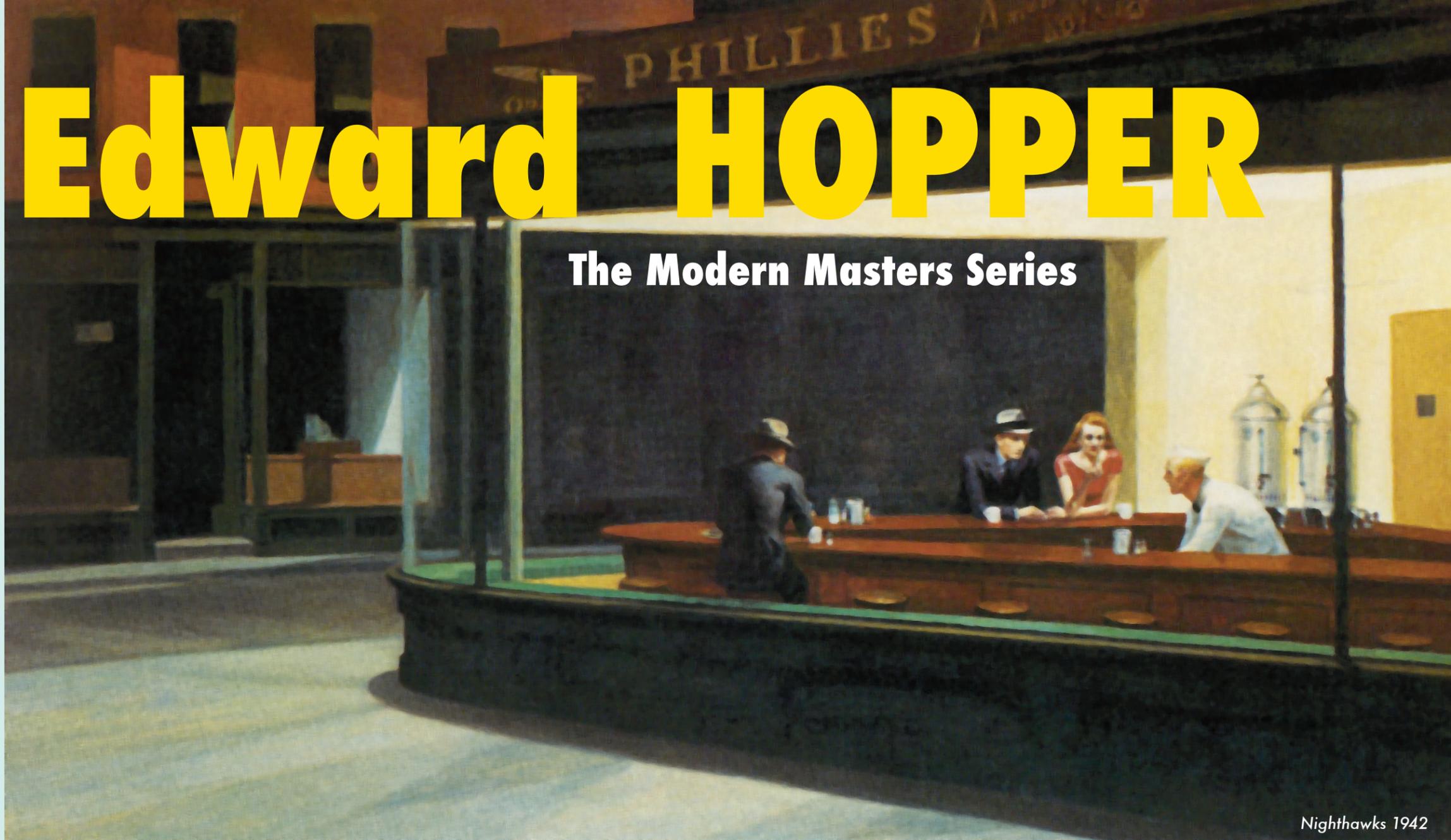Hopper in his studio 1963

Edward HOPPER

The Modern Masters Series

Nighthawks 1942

MAJOR WORKS

Austin Museum of Art

Edward Hopper was born on July 22, 1882, in Nyack, New York, and studied illustration in New York City at a commercial art school from 1899 to 1900. In 1901 he switched to painting and studied at the New York School of Art until 1906, largely under Robert Henri.

His early paintings were committed to realism and they exhibited some of the basic characteristics that he was to retain throughout his career: compositional style based on simple, large geometric forms; flat masses of color; and the use of architectural elements in his scenes for their strong verticals, horizontals, and diagonals.

Although one of Hopper's paintings was exhibited in the famous Armory Show of 1913 in New York City, his work excited little interest, and he was obliged to work principally as a commercial illustrator for the next decade. In 1925 he painted "House by the Railroad", a landmark in American art that marked the advent of his mature style. The emphasis on blunt shapes and angles and the stark play of light and shadow were in keeping with his earlier work, but the mood—which was the real subject of the painting—was new: It conveyed an atmosphere of all-embracing loneliness and almost eerie solitude.

Hopper continued to work in this style for the rest of his life, refining and purifying it, but never abandoning its basic principles. Most of his paintings portray scenes in New York or New England, both country and city scenes, all with a spare, homely quality—deserted streets, half-empty theaters, gas stations, railroad tracks, rooming houses.

Although Hopper's work was outside the mainstream of mid 20th century abstraction, his simplified schematic style was one of the influences on the later representational revival and on pop art. Hopper's body of work inspired generations of American artists throughout and beyond the twentieth century. He died May 15, 1967, in New York City.

"The whole answer is there on the canvas."

Edward Hopper