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Art and Understanding in Edward Hopper’s *Rooms by the Sea*

Introduction

Edward Hopper began his career at the New York School of Art, and his career was deeply shaped by American nationalism and the development of an American artistic identity. A lot of this identity expressed itself in the subject of his works and their inspirations, from his time spend on the sea at Cape Cod to the metropolitan corners that he is so famous for in New York City. Yet, as Hopper dug deeper into his critical role as a progenitor of uniquely American art, his art became increasingly personal (Levin, 4-7).

What is the context in Hoppers life in which *Rooms by the Sea* emerges

*Rooms by the Sea* is a painting that is not immediately striking. The subject of the work is ostensibly understandable; the canvas mainly consists of a blank white wall, struck with a beam of sunlight delineated by the doorway to its right. The ocean and sky break the doorway into bottom and top halves. To the left of the wall is another doorway, which peeks into a room with a framed picture on the wall, a couch or chair of some sort, and a dresser or chest. All of this is underlined by a yellow floor.

The more that one pays attention to the specific objects in the painting, the more it becomes clear that this work is not as simple as it first seems. The perspective seems to be too close, because none of the objects are depicted in full. The sunlight bleaching the wall doesn’t really make any sense given the doorway opening that forms its shape, and the ocean is either unreasonably close to the foundation of the building or the building is unreasonably high up into the air. Extended observation leads to a gradual feeling of unease in *Rooms by the Sea*. The severely geometric designs force the unnatural into the natural. The space for living is empty and lonely. The surreal is bleeding into the real.

How does this fit into the context discussed previously

Draw some conclusions from the painting (thematic)

Why do I like it? Why is it good art?

Conclusion

Works Cited

Hopper, Edward. *Rooms by the Sea*. 1951. *Yale University Art Gallery*, artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/52939. Accessed 27 February 2023.