independence which Thomas Eakins gave us, but which for a time was lost.

Hopper
House by the Railroad
Gas
Illustrated on page 272

James Thrall Soby, *Contemporary Painters*, **1948**, pages 36, 37, 39

What is almost always conveyed, what holds our attention in the best of Hopper's works, is the exceptionally clear and devout communication between the painter and his subjects. His language of seeming understatement has a backlash to it. It is not eloquent, but it is memorable, and his art has some of the dramatic force of evidence blurted in a courtroom, in an atmosphere of long circumlocution. He must be deeply stirred or he does not attempt to record his reaction. He works slowly, with infinite care, and sometimes goes through extended periods of inactivity between paintings. And perhaps the struggle his technique costs him accounts for the penetrating quality of his painting. For if the surfaces of his pictures are usually bland and unspectacular, their under-structure is exceptionally firm and sensitive. One has only to look at his recent handling of stone masonry to realize how sure his control of pigment can be. He gives New York's granite something of marble's inner illumination, and cuts its joinings with a sculptor's sense of form. . . .

If Hopper describes light with rare skill, he also records the density of air like the most delicate of barometers. A subtle gradation of atmospheric values is common to many of his finest works. In *Gas*, for example, the air seems to thin out as the eye moves from the bright area of the service station toward the thick woods across the road, light and the breeze waning together. The extremes of his atmospheric control are to be found in his depiction of absolute calm and the medium wind, and it is typical of his restraint that he should reject [Winslow] Homer's northeasters as too plainly dramatic. But he can bring the summer air to a dead halt—a far more difficult task than might be supposed—and he handles the wind with knowledgeable stagecraft. . . .

When the artist paints rooms rather than facades, a comparable lull in activity is usually evoked, and we may take his words on one of John Sloan's New York interiors as an indication that a romantic mood is consciously sought. Sloan's picture, Hopper declared, "renders remarkably the quality of a brooding and silent interior in this vast city of ours." Hopper's depiction of interiors is, however, more piercing in emotion than Sloan's and less often concerned with local color's cheerful familiarity. . . .

Hopper is not a man for whom drawing or color is an unrelenting necessity. He works only when accumulated or sudden experience has inspired him with something to say. But his strength lies in the fact that he is so inartistic in the European sense of the term: no formalism, no seeking for graciousness, no painterly references; but self-invented realism, warm, convinced, romantic in overtone through its very bluntness of statement. If his expression cannot be compared in scope or power to that of leading Europeans, it is emphatically his own and American. Who abroad does what he does? Who there or here does it so well?

Jacob Lawrence
Four works from The Migration Series. 1940–41
Illustrated on page 273

Jacob Lawrence, *The Great Migration*, **1992**, n.p.

This is the story of an exodus of African-Americans who left their homes and farms in the South around the time of World War I and traveled to northern industrial cities in search of better lives. It was a momentous journey. Their movement resulted in one of the biggest population shifts in the history of the United States, and the migration is still going on for many people today.

The great migration is a part of my life. I grew up knowing about people on the move from the time I could understand what words meant. There was always talk in my house of other families arriving from the South. My family was part of the first big wave of migration, which occurred between the years 1916 and 1919. . . .

I arrived in New York City's Harlem community in 1930, when I was thirteen years of age. . . . After school I went to an arts-and-crafts program at the Utopia Children's House, which my mother enrolled me in to keep me busy while she was at work. I decided then that I wanted to be an artist. . . .

Eventually, teachers, friends, even actors on the street corners helped me to understand how my own experiences fit into a much larger story—the history of African-Americans in this country. It seemed almost inevitable that I would tell this story in my art. I spent many hours at the Schomburg Library in Harlem reading books about the great migration, and I took notes. Soon my research gave me the images I needed to tell the story of the great migration. Many of the images were new for me—along with my street scenes, I would now need to paint rural landscapes, images of violence,