Emil Hoppé, Pictorialist

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I. Emil Otto Hoppé, 1878–1972
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Introduction

Emil Otto Hoppé was the undisputed leader of pictorial portraiture in Europe between 1910 and 1925. Rarely in the history of photography has a photographer been so famous in his own lifetime among the general public. In the early years of his career, the American comedian Raymond Hitchcock, then the rage of London, improvised an additional verse to his popular song "I'm All Dressed Up and Nowhere to Go" to the effect that he could not even go to Hoppé's studio because the photographer was sitting in the stalls in front of him. During the run of the play The Green Flag, a large portrait of the leading lady that Hoppé had made a few days previously was placed in a prominent position and served as an excuse to introduce his name during the play. Inspired by the talk given by Hoppé at the Royal Photographic Society, E. T. Hopkins wrote for Punch a fifty-two-line poem based on the photographer's remarks. This poem is worth quoting in full as it suggests the reasons for Hoppé's fame and the ways his work differed stylishly from his predecessors.

I remember, I remember,
How of old our portraits lied,
Making April of September
And the sitter satisfied;
How each little blemish faded,
Yielding to artistic stress
And the stubborn chin was shaded
Nicely into nothingness.

Never then the crow imprinted
Ugly footmarks near the eye;
Wrinkles, which the mirth hinted
Lines passed politely by.

Any nose a thought tip-tilted
Caught the flawlessness of Greece,
And our freckles fairly wilted
At a camera's caprice.

Negativing every passion
Thus our faces surely sank
In the photographic fashion,
To a pure and spotless blank.
I'll at last they won perfection
Drained of mere expression's dregs.
Oval, even, past correction
New created—just like eggs.

I remember! Ah, the sorrow
When a cherished custom dies!
That was in the past; To-morrow
Proofs shall not idealize;
Photographs shall bluntly copy,
Though the egotist make moan,
(Perish all the tribe of Hoppé)
Just the features that we own.

Of course, much of this fame was due not only to the fact that Hoppé had a pure, aggressive style, but also that he specialized in portraits of the famous. It is difficult to think of a prominent name in politics, art, literature, and the theater who did not sit before his camera in his equally famous studio. Sir John Millais's former home in South Kensington. He was the Cecil Beaton of his day. In fact, Sir Cecil publicly acknowledged his own debt to Hoppé in these generous words, which are from the introduction to Hoppé's autobiography.

If as a school boy in the holidays, someone had told me
as I sat poring over the reproductions of E. O. Hoppé's photographs in various magazines, that one day I should be asked to write an introduction to the Master's works, I could not have believed that life held such rewards. Now, I pen these few sentences with the same feeling of awe
that I approached Millais House in South Kensington,
when I went there fifteen years ago, in vain, to see if there
was a display of chef-d'oeuvre, outside that Holy of Holies
where the pictures were taken. . . .
Figure 1  Emil Otto Hoppé was probably the most famous portraitist in the world in the 1920s. Then he was forgotten. By chance I found him still alive in a nursing home in the English countryside. He was ninety-four years old. What an experience, to talk to a man who was a close friend of A. L. Cohurn, G. B. Shaw, Diaghilev, and practically anyone who was anyone in the early decades of the century. Hoppé died soon after —R. J.
I used to pray that each week would produce a new group of Hoppé’s in the magazines, and when these reproductions were placed in a sort of magic lantern that I possessed, and enlarged to gargantuan proportions on the wall, the effect was almost overwhelming…. [Hoppé 1945:5–6]

It seems incredible that someone could have inspired such awe among photographers and such popular adulation among the public and have been forgotten so quickly and completely. E. O. Hoppé lived to be ninety-four, long enough to read, in the Gernsheim’s History of Photography, the news that he had died in 1967 (1969:504)! Not many get to read their own obituaries.

I was fortunate in meeting Hoppé on several occasions during the last months of his life. Even at his advanced age, his mind and memory were extremely acute. At each visit he gave me notes, scraps of reminiscences, jottings of ideas he had prepared before my arrival. In our last meeting, he gave me access to all his scrapbooks, personal writings, and manuscripts. A fraction of this information is contained in this article.¹

In one of his notes to me, Hoppé divided his photographic life into three periods:

3. 1945–71. Devoted to the publishing of books (over 30) and to journalism. Also some experimental photography.

It was during the first period that Hoppé became a household name, and it is this aspect of his work, “pure portraiture,” that I have dealt with in this introduction to his life and work.

Early Life and Career

Emil Otto Hoppé was born in Munich on April 14, 1878, the only son of a prominent banker, proud of his French Huquetun heritage. Soon after his birth, the Hoppé family moved to Vienna where Emil received a fine education, completed in Paris and Munich,² and acquired his Austrian accent, which he had for the rest of his life. It was a cultured, comfortable upbringing, free from discord and insecurity, which both shaped his own personality and enabled him to mix with kings and commoners,³ and allowed him to be tolerated, and seemingly accepted, by both.

In 1895, at the age of seventeen, his student days were over, and the question of his future career arose. His father wanted him to follow his footsteps into a bank. Even though he “had no leaning towards that at all . . . in order to pacify my father I agreed . . . ” he duly served his apprenticeship in banks in Munich and Berlin for ten years. In later years, Hoppé would write, “I owe much of my success as a photographer to the discipline of banking. Nor was I unhappy in a bank. The hours were reasonable, and my hobby of photography gave pleasant relaxation” (Hoppé 1945:10).

In 1903, Hoppé was given his first camera. In the following four years he won a series of awards in open photographic exhibitions and competitions, which inevitably brought disenchantment with the secure and unremitting life of a banker and a growing interest in taking to the camera professionally. Midway through this period of change in attitude, a seemingly unrelated incident was to have a profound effect on Hoppé’s career. His father had arranged for him to spend two years in the Shanghai Banking Corporation, an experience that would undoubtedly “broaden my outlook.” The first leg of the journey to China was from Vienna to Southampton, where he would board a steamer to Shanghai. But his travels were interrupted in England. In London he met one of his school friends from Vienna. Hoppé not only joined this friend’s office at the London Stock Exchange, but also married his sister. For the next two years, life seemed good—a new wife who shared his love of the arts and a secure job with excellent prospects. Unfortunately, photography was much too tempting to relegate to a mere hobby. His work was becoming more appreciated, but it was not yet distinctive. In 1907, The Daily Mail offered a first prize of £100 in an open photographic contest. This was a handsome sum for those days, and Hoppé received that if he won the contest he would abandon banking for professional portraiture. A few weeks later he was awarded the prize and with £100 capital opened his business in October 1907 in a small flat at 10 Margravine Gardens, Baron’s Court, near Hammersmith, a street comprised entirely of artists’ studios.

There was, of course, intense family opposition to his new profession; his friends were unsympathetic. As one of them remarked, “You are mad to think of becoming a photographer. Only just married and now contemplate jeopardising security for a wild goose chase. You ought to show a little more sense of responsibility” (ibid.).

About this time, Hoppé fell suddenly and inexplicably ill. He later felt that this illness might have been due to psychological causes, “a rooted prejudice in the sub-conscious against the prospect of a lifetime of routine” (ibid.). Fortunately, his doctor was not only
a man of understanding, but also an enthusiastic amateur photographer. With his encouragement and his own young wife’s support, Hoppé recovered quickly and began his second career as a maker of portraits. His avowed intent was to break loose from the artificiality that was typical of the average studio portrait of the period and to “produce work in which character rather than flattery [was] the dominant note” (ibid.:15).

In this case, idealism also proved to be good business. His portraits, strongly individualistic in comparison to the contrived staginess of the usual commercial work of the day, became known and admired by a growing circle of sitters. Two years later, in 1909, business was good enough to risk moving his studio to Baker Street, a much more central position than Hammersmith, in the southwest suburbs.

It was during his Baker Street period that Hoppé’s name attracted the label “the photographer of men.” His portraits of women were considered too frank. One of his first sitters was Frank Brangwyn, whose Hoppé portrait was seen and admired by Mr. Ingrams, proprietor of the Illustrated London News. Ingrams sent twenty-three other famous men to Hoppé’s studio and published the results as a special supplement of the magazine.

Hoppé’s portraits were so distinctive because of a combination of three factors—careful “research” before each sitting, an unusual studio layout, and his camera design.

In striving for success in portraiture, Hoppé believed that

the cultivation of a sincere and cultured personality is of paramount importance . . . they [the sitters] will respond readily to a photographer who can talk in an interesting and informed way about a variety of topics; and response, though it may be brief as a cloud passing over the sun in summer, is that note of vital humanity which, when captured on a photographer’s negative, makes all the difference between a likeness that is wooden and without merit and a work of art. (ibid.:12)

Hoppé only photographed by appointment, in order to have enough time to research his subjects’ backgrounds, personalities, and hobbies as themes for conversations in the studio. On being summoned to photograph King George V, Hoppé found that his subject was a keen philatelist and, primed for a talk on stamps, was able to take a relaxed picture of the king discussing his hobby. It did not take much research to learn that Caruso sang! But Hoppé was delighted when his sitter agreed to be photographed singing La Traviata while the photographer’s wife accompanied him on the piano in the studio. Hoppé believed that the photographer “whose mind is cloistered like a darkroom” could not be successful in portraiture. He made it a point to read the leading daily newspapers and the best weeklies. In addition he was a keen student of psychology all his life, since the photographer “can never stop learning about human nature” (ibid.).

Hoppé’s studios in Margravine Gardens and Baker Street were unconventional for the time. He was convinced that the artificial environment of the conventional portrait studio invariably led to stilted, hackneyed pictures. He dispensed with painted backgrounds, fluted papier-mâché columns and balustrades, and designed his own studio to soothe a sitter rather than encourage restraint and tension: His studio resembled an informal drawing room, with pastel draperies replacing artificial backgrounds.

The photographer’s career was no less conventional. He commissioned a London manufacturer, “whose principles were horrified by my ideas,” to build him an 8-×10-inch reflex camera. This camera had several advantages over the conventional type. Hoppé could watch the image on the focusing screen up to the actual moment of exposure; the plate was in position all the time, obviating the need to divert attention from the sitter at the most crucial moments in order to insert the plate-holder; and a dark cloth was unnecessary—“Diving one’s head under yards of black material, getting entangled in it while trying to keep up a muffled conversation, then emerging wild and dishevelled to face a startled, uncomfortably amused, or slightly contemptuous sitter, is not, in my opinion, the best way to establish relations between subject and photographer” (ibid.:13).

The large format was considered a necessity since enlargements were rarely made. Hoppé preferred to contact print his glass plates onto platinum paper or occasionally carbon. He loved platinum paper because of its “cold austerity” and carbon, particularly when applied to wood instead of paper, because of its “richness of tone and quality.” He did not favor the gum-bichromate process, so popular at this time among artist-photographers. He felt that it suggested artificiality and manipulation, and too often the results were “horrors of misapplied energy . . . perpetuated by the ignorant” (ibid.:14).

The two years Hoppé spent in Baker Street were successful and rewarding. His portraits of men were becoming imbued with his own style—a harsh, clear, spartan, and uncontrived approach that was gaining admirers among the upper strata of society. In his credo, Hoppé wrote: “I never wanted to be just a photographer. I wanted to become the photographer of the most interesting people” (ibid.:16). He wanted his studio to be in the most convenient area of London for the rich, influential, and famous.

Cromwell Place seemed ideal. It was, and to some extent still is, a smart, wealthy neighborhood in South Kensington—a society suburb a few minutes’ walk from the Victoria and Albert Museum, Knightsbridge,
and Hyde Park. Sir Cecil Beaton lived a few streets away from Hoppé's studio, which was in the magnificent former home of John Everett Millais, one of the young founders of the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

It was his wife's idea to rent Millais House on a thirty-seven year lease. Capital was raised with a mortgage company, and the Hoppé's moved into the four-story, twenty-seven-room mansion. The number of rooms seems more than a photographer would need, yet very quickly every inch of space was utilized. The domestic rooms in the basement became workrooms; the housekeeper's room became the enlarging room; the kitchen became a finishing room; two pantries became printing and developing rooms; the silver room became the room for storing chemicals. Two of the largest rooms became studios, one for artificial-light work and the other for natural-light work. The second floor was devoted to offices and plate storage. Hoppé and his wife lived in a large, comfortable flat on the third and fourth floors, completely self-contained, with its own front door.

The gamble of setting up a studio in a historic house, without a showcase or even a sign on the door to indicate the occupant's business, was paid off handsomely with a piece of good fortune that occurred in the first year. Sergei Diaghilev had brought his ballet company to London, and the complete cast was photographed by Hoppé. He had for all intents and purposes the exclusive right to photograph all Diaghilev's ballets and the artists taking part in them. The results were exhibited at the Fine Art Society, Bond Street, which published sets of the studies in photogravure. The photographs were also the subject of Hoppé's first book, *Studies from the Russian Ballet* (1912), a portfolio of fifteen prints. In the following years, Hoppé's portraits included George Bernard Shaw, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, Henry James, Alice Meynell, Marinetti, Fedor Challapin, Jacob Epstein, Clemenceau, Sir Edward Elgar, John Galsworthy, Eugene Goossens, Augustus John, Maeterlinck, Max Reinhardt, John Singer Sargent, most of the crowned heads of Europe, and Benito Mussolini, Kemal Ataturk, and Adolf Hitler, to name only a few of the famous and infamous of his sitters.

By now, Hoppé was also photographing women but with the same direct attention to character, rather than subtle flattery, that had characterized his male portraits. All this changed in 1922, with the publication of his *Book of Fair Women*. Hoppé was no longer dubbed "photographer of men" but "connoisseur of women's beauty." The reaction was extreme. Hoppé's mail was full of indignant demands that he explain why the writer's wife, mistress, favorite actress was not included. He was even offered a substantial amount of money to publish another volume containing the portrait "of a lady whose reputation flew like a tattered banner over Mayfair" (Hoppé 1945:96). Randolph Hearst "commanded" Hoppé by telegram to come to the United States to judge a beauty contest. Since Hearst had mentioned an extravagant fee, Hoppé obliged. A leading New York daily announced his arrival with, "Great Britain's challenge to America." Rivalry was intense, excitement ran high. The results were syndicated to 384 newspapers from the Atlantic to the Pacific and resulted in a book that created an equal stir in Britain, where it was reviewed in practically every newspaper in the country. Not all were as bigoted and unbelievable as this example from the London correspondent of the *Daily Despatch*:

*The book of Fair Women*, which Mr. E. O. Hoppé has just produced, raises an interesting problem to those of us who are more familiar with what the Americans call the Nordic type of beauty. It seems . . . that Mr. Hoppé is asking a little too much of us when he asks admiration for Indian, Hawaiian, and Chinese beauties. There may be Venuses among the Hottentots, but it must either be a very educated palette that appreciates them or people capable of blinding themselves to the natural distaste for colour. Mr. Hoppé's book raises the question: is it possible for a coloured woman to be beautiful?*

A studio in a London landmark, the notoriety of his sitters, and the furore over his book of beauty: these factors accelerated Hoppé's widespread fame.

Another aspect of Hoppé's portraiture that emerged in 1922 and, like his expansion into the realm of female beauty, was marked by a publication, was revealed by *Taken from Life*, by John Davys Beresford. It contained seven rich photogravures from photographs by Hoppé. In his introduction Beresford stated, "The chief credit for this book must be given to Mr. Hoppé. It was he who invented it, accepting me later as collaborator . . . and now that the book is finished, I feel more strongly than ever that the photographs are the truly descriptive matter and my letterpress no more than reference which may corroborate the readers' inferences."

*Taken from Life* consisted of interviews by Beresford with seven members of the lower strata of British society, each person's biography accompanied by a Hoppé portrait. In this sense the book may be compared with John Thomson's and Adolphe Smith's *Street Life in London*. But there the comparison ends. Beresford pointed out that any social message was incidental: "I had nothing more in my mind than the presentation of certain little pieces of human history . . ." He apologized for any intrusion of a criticism of the society that produced such poverty as he described by stating that "these references can be easily overlooked; and those who don't hold with that sort of thing may skip the relevant chapters." Even Hoppé's photographs of the subjects, artistically and tastefully arranged in the studio, isolated the poor and deprived from their social milieu.
The activity of Millais House did not center on Hoppé's portraiture alone. His studio provided a fine setting for exhibitions, and he generously gave space to many young artists whose work was exhibited there for the first time. He staged sets and designs by Herman Hosse and Robert Edmund Jones, exhibited Polish batik and graphic art, presented a series of musical evenings attended by representatives of many embassies (and visited by Queen Mary), and displayed the arts and crafts of Rumania (visited by Queen Marie). Perhaps the most memorable exhibition was the theater designs of Gordon Craig—although most of the stage and society visitors were as eager to see and meet Ellen Terry and her son as they were to see his work. For many years a marionette theater was installed in Millais House and was exhibited at the International Theatre Exhibition held at the South Kensington Museum in 1922. Hoppé designed the sets for a marionette play at this exhibition and also organized the American section.

His experiments with the marionette theater led to a deeper involvement with the theater proper. Millais House eventually became the headquarters of a club called The Plough, the object of which was to produce plays that were new and original in concept and had not been staged previously in England. Members of the committee included Ernest Thesiger, Augustus John, Jacob Epstein, George Sheringham, John Galsworthy, Lady Diana Duff-Cooper, and Lady Lavery. In the four years of The Plough's operation, ten plays were produced. Meanwhile, Hoppé had gone to America in order to open a New York studio. He was in New York when he received a cable asking him to return to produce the club's first motion picture film. His lecture engagement could not be canceled, and when he eventually returned to London The Plough had virtually expired.

In addition to these nonphotographic activities, Hoppé was already acting as art editor of Colour, as well as being New York correspondent for several London journals. Hoppé was equally active in the area of established photography. He was a founding member of the London Salon of Photography, the exhibitions of The Linked Ring, a famous and influential group of pictorialist art photographers.

In 1908 he arranged an exhibition in London of the German Pictorial School, which included prints by Hofmeister, Rudolph Dührkoop, Eul, and several photographers trained by Frank Eugene at Professor Emmerick's school in Munich. He was invited by the German Photographic Association to take his own one-man show to Munich in January 1909; he returned to London with a one-man show by Dührkoop.

Early in his career, Hoppé submitted about a dozen prints to an exhibition organized by The Linked Ring and was delighted when they were all accepted and "hung on the line." This, he said, "proved to be one of the important milestones of my career" (Hoppé 1945:121). In 1909, an international exhibition was held at Dresden, which contained probably the largest exhibition of photography to that date. The accredited British representatives were E. O. Hoppé and Sir Benjamin Stone. Hoppé was in charge of the pictorial section while Stone looked after the records branch.

Hoppé was also given many one-man shows, the best of which were at the Goupil Galleries, London. One of these, in 1922, was accompanied by a catalog with foreword by John Galsworthy: "One could go on indefinitely praising the selective psychology shown by these portraits. And it is by power of selecting type, and the exact moment in which to fix expression, that a photographer reaches the heights. To be a really great photographer he must first be a great psychologist...." Hoppé was also busy writing articles to the British amateur photographic press. His opinions on the role of photography seem commonplace today, but in the 1920s they were controversial. He was violently opposed to excessive manipulation of the image, particularly if the aim was to make the print resemble a painting, because he believed that photography should be true to its own characteristics. He had a horror of afterwork. In fact, the only compromise Hoppé made to the taste of the times was his own special soft-focus effect (which Cecil Beaton admired so much). The soft-focus lens was used on the enlarger, not on the camera. The iris diaphragm was slowly opened and closed during the printing exposure, which "spreads" the highlights into the shadow areas so that "the final effect is a roundness which I have not found it possible to obtain by any other method" (ibid:23).

Hoppé had joined the Royal Photographic Society in 1906 and was elected a Fellow one year later (the year he turned professional). He quickly found that the society was too conventional to suit his own personality ("if you have seen one exhibition you have seen them all"), and if he became one of its more open critics, he was pleased that through its meetings he met many photographers who were to become his close friends. He was given a one-man show at the society's headquarters in 1910 (April-May) and was elected a member of its council in 1914, the year Furley Lewis became president, of whom he wrote:

In my opinion, he was the foremost art photographer of the time. He was extremely handsome, charming and dressed the part of a typical Chelsea bohemian. It was impossible to mistake him for anything but an artist since he looked the part entirely. He loved music and would play his favorite composer, Grieg, on the piano with great skill. On a visit to Ireland, he married a simple Irish girl and, in vain, tried to teach her an appreciation of music. Furley drifted into photography from his work as a
process engraver. He became enamoured with Russian pictorial art while visiting that country and began to make massive bromoils on his return to England.

Perhaps the closest of his photographer friends was Alvin Langdon Coburn, although Hoppe had met him while he was still working in the Stock Exchange, prior to becoming a photographer himself. Hoppe claimed it was Coburn's encouragement that helped him to make the rash decision to become a professional portraitist. This was in the days before Coburn's marriage, when he was living with his mother in Bloomsbury. He and his mother spent each Christmas with the Hoppe family in their sixteenth-century farmhouse home. Coburn playing the part of Father Christmas for Hoppe's small children.

Horsley Hinton was a very different character.

He looked like a lieutenant in the navy, very straight and strict. But we got on well together and he was very helpful to me, by defending my point of view against the home-baked and old-fashioned photography beloved at the Royal Photographic Society. Our only disagreement was over his method of combination printing. To my mind this was a pictorial representation of subjects that did not exist. But I must admit that he had good taste. His pictures did not display an offense against tone values, which characterised the excessively handworked pictures of so many photographers of the period.

Hoppe was never a close friend of Frederick Evans, although they had a mutual respect for each other and for the medium of photography. They believed a medium is debased by attempting to control it in ways that destroy its inherent characteristics. Evans's fiery temper prevented him from making many close friends, but he was almost universally admired for his superb craftsmanship.

Notes

1 Although Hoppe's memory was acute when it came to personalities and events, it was vague on the matter of dates. I have attempted to verify his own dates from various other sources.
2 Several sources of information state that Hoppe also lived in Heidelberg during his early life, but when and why are not known.
3 In later years, Hoppe would not only photograph most of the crowned heads of Europe, but also for months with a band of wandering Rumanian gypsies, photograph the most beautiful women in America, live with the Navaho Indians, and so on.
4 Scarborough Post, October 26, 1922.
5 A series of books, each devoted to a single country. Each volume cost 30s, sold over 100,000 copies, and was illustrated by more than 300 photogravure reproductions of photographs. Hoppe's first volume in the series was Picturesque Great Britain, followed by books on Czechoslovakia, the United States, Australasia, and Insulinde (Dutch East Indies).

End of an Era

Between 1911 and 1929, Hoppe reached the peak of his career as a portrait photographer in a period that made his name internationally known. By the late 1920s, Hoppe realized that he had reached a turning point. Looking back he reviewed twenty years of professional life: the famous people he had photographed, the honors he had been awarded, his rich and full experience. He was the most famous portrait photographer in Europe. "Then it suddenly dawned on me that youth was no longer on my side. I was nearing the half-century mark" (Hoppe 1945:183).

"Repressed wanderlust" proved too much of a temptation. Moreover, his son and daughter had grown up and left the family to find lives of their own. His understanding wife, as in 1907, encouraged him to make the decision, pointing out that travelling meant he could take his camera to people in their own environments rather than expect them to visit his studio. The publishers of Orbis Terrarum invited Hoppe to become one of their contributors. His job was to spend a year in each country featured in the series.

Hoppe accepted the assignment, thus beginning the second period of his life in photography, as a travelling photojournalist. From 1930 until his retirement in 1945, he switched to the field of journalism with a camera and made extensive trips across Europe, the American Southwest, Australia and New Zealand, India and Borneo, Sumatra and the Far East, to name a few, publishing over thirty books of his words and pictures. Up to the age of ninety-two, Hoppe was busily exploring the close-up world with his camera, producing abstract images in his garden and home. These periods of his life deserve further study. But in this brief introduction to the work of E. O. Hoppe I have concentrated on the years that made him the most celebrated portrait photographer in Europe.

References

- Beresford, John Davy, and E. O. Hoppe. 1922. Taken from Life. London: Collins.
II. Hoppé's Romantic America

Mick Gidley

Figure 1  New York City,
Brooklyn Bridge (ca.
1919). Romantic America,
pl. 4.
Mick Gidley is the Director of a new Centre for American and Commonwealth Arts and Studies (ArriCAS) at the University of Exeter, England. His publications include Kopet: A Documentary Narrative of Chief Joseph’s Last Years (1981) and American Photography (British Association for American Studies, 1983): With One Sky Above Us: Life on an Indian Reservation at the Turn of the Century (1979), including contemporary photographs by Indian Agency physician Dr. Edward H. Latham, has just appeared in paperback from the University of Washington Press.
In Search of an Author

Emil Otto Hoppé (1878–1972) was an artist. In many of his publications he spoke of himself as an artist, sometimes with a capital A, and he clearly brought to his camera work the kind of self-consciousness that we habitually associate with art. In his autobiography, for example, he claimed both that he was the first to photograph Manhattan through the steel network of the Brooklyn Bridge (see Figure 1) and that there was a profound compositional affinity between that photograph and his own earlier *Nuit Imminente* (ca. 1906), a much-exhibited study of a tree branch against the evening sky (Hoppé 1945:100, 126). While Hoppé’s assertion about the Brooklyn Bridge was mistaken (Karl Strauss had already done it), it is true that throughout his life he cultivated friendships with other artists, especially writers, and regularly exhibited his work in contexts that emphasized their artistic nature. As early as 1909 Hoppé was in charge of the British pictorial section at the huge Dresden photographic exhibition. His role was parallel to that of Alfred Stieglitz, the doyen of the Photo Secession movement, in putting together the Buffalo exhibition of 1910 and was clearly separate from that of the great Victorian figure, Sir Benjamin Stone, who held sway over the British records branch of the Dresden exhibition (Hoppé 1945:121–122). Given all this, it seems that it should be possible to identify the characteristics of Hoppé’s style, if only for a particular period, in this case the years leading up to the production of *Romantic America* (1927), the work constituting our focus here. Certainly, Hoppé himself evidenced a strong analytical sense in such writings as “Pictorial Photography Assessed without Prejudice.” He asserted there that “when the choice of the theme is not accidental but selective, then ... its ultimate rendering in pictorial form, and its relation to actuality, [are] dependent upon the personality and the creative power of the artist” (Hoppé 1955:138).

However, while Hoppé was able to dissect pictorial photography with confidence, dividing it into five distinct categories of endeavor, his own work resists such stylistic analysis and classification. This is partly because Hoppé was also a professional, even commercial, photographer. “I never ignored the finances of my work,” he recalled in 1946. Remembering his early years as a bank employee, he said, “Maybe I have subconsciously never forgotten the lessons of my early commercial training ... I see no reason to think a man a better artist because he ignores the material things of life. ... He may be good despite of it; he can never be good because of it.”

Hoppé’s autobiographical writings are full of business advice to young photographers, full of anecdotes about his own commercial successes—from portraits taken in his subjects’ own homes to having exhibitions in such money-centered venues as department stores. Hoppé’s record books of his negatives, now held at the Mansell Collection in London, indicate that he worked on commission, undertaking many different kinds of jobs within the space of a few days. Sometimes he was, in effect, working on two commissions at the same time. While gathering images for *Romantic America*, he also continued his lucrative portrait sittings in New York; he took the likenesses of the then very popular author Joseph Hergesheimer, was also commissioned to make views of Hergesheimer’s family and the family home—Dower House—in Westchester County, Pennsylvania, and one such view became Plate 22 in *Romantic America*. There is a similar overlap in the case of some of his studies of the Ford plant in Detroit (see Figure 2); these were taken on commission for Ford and appeared between the covers of his pictorial study as Plates 258–264. In California he seems to have worked at a photographic feature article entitled “Pictorial California,” at a series of studies of raisin production for the Sun Maid Company, and at the accumulation of further pictures for his American book, occasionally using the same images for all three. Also in California, he could not resist making a few studies of scantily dressed “Santa Monica Bathing Beauties,” but these were intended for more private circulation than the pages of *Romantic America*. In other words, we lack an author in a fully authoritative sense; Hoppé’s was the same seeing eye behind the viewfinder, but what he selected to see was not always, in his own words, “dependent upon ... the creative power of the artist” alone.

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Figure 4  *New Orleans, Windows and Shutters* (1919 or 1926). (Mansell Collection, neg. 1/502-4.)
A Hundred Thousand Exposures

The sheer volume of Hoppé's work inhibits the kind of
analysis that would be comparable to an analysis of the
work of his friends and contemporaries Alvin
Langdon Coburn or Edward Steichen. Hoppé called
his autobiography Hundred Thousand Exposures, and
that figure represents no exaggeration. This is not
simply a matter of Hoppé's longevity (see the
Chronology in this issue). In the two-year span be-
tween July 1926 and October 1928, which includes
the second half of the period of his most intense pic-
ture gathering for Romantic America, his negative
book shows that he produced 717 sequences of im-
ages, many of these sequences containing as many
as fifty individual exposures. In fact, a numeral in the
book almost never represents a single image. One
reviewer asserted that Hoppé selected the 304 images
for Romantic America from "over 4000" taken for it.3
Thus the thirty pictures of Arizona in the book were
chosen from several hundred made, and he took
many photos of great cities like San Francisco,
Philadelphia (Figure 3), New Orleans (Figure 4), and
even Richmond, Virginia. Of New York City he made
literally hundreds of images, including sites both fa-
mous and commonplace (see Figures 5 and 6). As in
other cases of definable but massive collections of
images—the Farm Security Administration project, for
example—we are faced with the lack of an adequate
taxonomy; indeed, as I have remarked elsewhere,
eventually "serious research will have to be devoted to
finding ways of categorizing images into groups
limited enough to analyse" (Gidley 1983:10). In the
meantime, we are all too easily led into creating typi-
cal or representative, even quintessential, FSA or
Hoppé images based exclusively on the actual ones
that struck us most.

Both the pictures in the exhibition and those dis-
cussed in this essay are, I would have to admit, no
exception; though we have come to a focus of sorts
by concentrating primarily on Hoppé's Americani
cityscapes, the commentary here represents provisional
findings, an interim document. It was impossible to ig-
nore Hoppé's own accounts of his American experi-
ences and endeavors, though they proved of little
substantial help. The basic problem is that in addition
to Hoppé as Artist, Hoppé as Commercial Photo-
grapher, the autobiographical writings reveal another
Hoppé. This Hoppé was more concerned, for in-
stance, to stress his own virtues as a judge of female
beauty4 or more concerned to play up his own fame
among the famous than to lay bare the ideological or
artistic assumptions that informed his photographic
practice. While living and working at Millais House in
London, he mounted art exhibitions, including one of
contemporary American stage design, and founded
the Plough Theatre Company, an amateur group that
included Augustus John among its leading lights. In

the United States, mainly through the friendship of Dr.
Christian Brinton, an influential art critic and polymath
of the period, Hoppé cultivated friendships with nu-
erous American socialites and artists. Robert Frost,
Willa Cather, Theodore Dreiser, and Carl Sandburg
were a few of the writers who sat for him. Lillian Gish,
Tom Mix, Paul Robeson, and Jack Dempsey came to
his studio, and so did Albert Einstein, artists Robert
Henri and Max Weber, and Justice Oliver Wendell
Holmes.

Perhaps most insidious of all the roles Hoppé's
camera gifts enabled him to adopt was that of trav-
eler. A traveler able, as Mark Twain put it, to "pity
the untravelled with a compassion that had hardly a trace
of contempt in it," The Round the World with an
Camera (1934), which is much more about the world
than it is about his camera, even presents him as
currently traveling: it implicitly collides several dis-
tinctly different journeys into one transglobal trip.
Travel—"the emotional stir of far land and strange
peoples... queer trails... and remote romances"
(Hoppé 1934:18)—became a drug. Hoppé, who
In Search of America

The arrangement of pictures in Romantic America—reproduced in photogravure, with captions in four languages—is physically that of a huge geographical circle. The book opens with nineteen images of New York City, where most visitors first entered the United States, and proceeds southward through New Jersey and Pennsylvania toward Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. From Virginia we move into the Deep South—South Carolina and Georgia—before rallying in the vacation lands of Florida and journeying onward to Mississippi and Louisiana, especially New Orleans. Then out across Texas to New Mexico for a long foray into native American pueblos and Spanish settlements along the Rio Grande, Arizona, especially the Grand Canyon and Monument Valley in Navaho country, is explored in all its grandeur as a prelude to arrival in San Diego, southern California. Then northward through Los Angeles and San Francisco, in Oregon, and to Washington State. Next we face east—Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, with all their national parks and monuments—before eventually reaching the Mississippi at St. Louis. Then Chicago. Then Detroit, especially the Ford works. An irresistible stopover at Niagara delays our voyage down the Hudson before we set out on a circuit of New England: Connecticut, Massachusetts (notably Boston), and an autumn morning in New Hampshire. And we complete the circle with four images of Washington, D.C. (see Figures 7 to 13).

In 1926 Hoppé himself, in preparing the book, seems to have traversed a similar grand circle—though he also took time out to go by sea to the West Indies and Panama—and he later claimed that the journey took eleven months (Hoppé 1945:189). In truth, of course, the book constitutes an impelled ideal journey through the varied land and cityscapes of the continent: a conceptualization based on many ventures into the United States, from 1919 onward. These ventures included a special visit to Hollywood (see Figures 13 and 14) and the Indian country of the Southwest (where Hoppé said he was the first "European"—or, at least, "Englishman"—to see the renowned natural phenomenon featured in Plates 212–214, the "stone Rainbow Bridge" (Hoppé 1945:189; 1927:xxxvi; 1934:229)). In 1920 and 1921 he spent almost half of each year running a portrait studio in New York from which he also traveled out to such cities as Pittsburgh, Buffalo, and Atlantic City (see Figures 15 and 16). The pictures that were included in Romantic America were not, then, the result of an intense, brief encounter, but the product of a mature relationship.
Indeed, it could be said that Hoppé was already prepared for the constraints of his contract for the book when he took it on. It was part of the Orbis Terrarum series. Hoppé had recently completed work on the British volume, and he was in the process of accepting commissions for those on Czechoslovakia, Australasia, and the Dutch East Indies. In each the emphasis was to fall on architecture, landscape, topography. Hoppé himself recorded that, at about that time, he was asked to make landscape studies for a weekly journal, "the only stipulation being that no human figures should appear in the composition." "This commission very much appealed to me," he commented, "since . . . I was not convinced that the introduction of human interest always helps composition" (Hoppé 1945:164). In fact, from 1919 on he had been making studies of the Bowery area in New York that concentrated on scenes of silent desolation—seemingly abandoned barrels in an empty courtyard, clothes lines, mute shop fronts—in which human beings were curiously absent (see Figure 17). In some of those Bowery images, it even seems that humans are presented as fleeing out of the frame, as if in shame (see Figure 18). The dismal decay of the Bowery was not featured at all in Romantic America, and we should seek a reason. At this point it is sufficient to note that, in general, people are not the subject matter of the book.
Figure 9  Portland. A New Bridge (ca. 1926). (Mansell Collection, neg. 17403-4.)

Figure 10  Colorado. Royal Gorge. Grand Canyon of the Arkansas (ca. 1926). (Mansell Collection, neg. 17413-39.)

Figure 11  Chicago. Stockyards (1926). Romantic America, pl. 254. (Mansell Collection, neg. 17459-L.)
Figure 12  Niagara. American Falls (1926). Romantic America, pl. 269. (Vintage woodburytype print. Richard Hoppé Collection.)

Figure 13  California. Hollywood at Night (ca. 1925). Romantic America, pl. 148.

Figure 14  California. A Scene in Filmopolis (Universal City (ca. 1925). Romantic America, pl. 151. (Mansell Collection, neg. 17465-X.)
Human Documents

This is all the more curious because during the early twenties, Hoppé began seriously to collect images of a vast variety of human groups, his interest having been stimulated by the ethnic diversity of New York. Typical entries in his negative book are "Coloured Woman," "Jewish Girl Typco," "Negro Typo," "Typo of haired man" (whatever that signifies), and "American Types." Many negatives and some prints in such categories survive in the Mansell and Richard Hoppé Collections of Hoppé’s work (see Figures 19 and 20). "Romantic America" contains images of two native Americans, a black fruit vendor, a cowboy figure, a Spanish guitarist, and an elderly black man actually entitled "Uncle Remus"—figures selected, one suspecto, loco for their typicality than for their exoticism (see Figure 21). They are not really examples, I think, of Hoppé’s parallel preoccupation with what he called "human documents" or "types of the lower strata of society whose faces tell their life history." It is worth noting that it was on these human documents, from both New York and London (twenty-eight pictures from a total of 221), that John Galsworthy, then at the height of his fame as the creator of The Forsyte Saga, chose to dwell in his foreword to Hoppé’s exhibition at the Goupil Gallery, London, in January 1922.
The photograph is a rare exponent of national or group psychology. . . . Mr. Hoppé, always concerned with the underlying, succeeds . . . in revealing to us the peculiar difference that lies between the simple citizens of an old, and of a new country. He has elicited, by assembling his Londoners, the fixity of philosophy and class characteristics, the closed-door look, which we have in England beyond, I think, all other western countries. The faces are brimful of character, but it is a character functioning within strictly confined opportunity. These are people with an outlook limited from birth. Pass from them to the New York East-side types, and one is conscious of a lifted lid, of a range untried.8

One might well think that such photographs would cry out for inclusion in a book intended to evoke the essence of a nation. Clearly, the exclusion of such images from Romantic America indicates a radical split, on Hoppé's part, between people and place. He was after something else.

"From the moment when the late Joseph Pennell showed me his remarkable lithographs of New York, I was attracted to the pictorial possibilities of American cities," Hoppé recalled. "Most of the pictures one had seen depicted the pulsating stream of life flowing through them, but I felt more strongly than anything else their static qualities, their loneliness and grandeur" (Hoppé 1945:187). These were the characteristics stressed by the photographs chosen to promote Romantic America in publicity brochures: an awesome view of the Grand Canyon, the Brooklyn Bridge image mentioned at the beginning of this essay, and the span of the Delaware Bridge in Philadelphia (see Figure 22).9

It is true that the Orbis Terrarum volume Hoppé did on Britain was also relatively unpeopled, but its emphasis was different. As Charles F. G. Masterman noted in his introduction to the book, urbanization was making sharp inroads into all aspects of the British scene, but Hoppé, he said, "has seized the period before the change which is coming . . . selecting in deed many historic places familiar throughout the
world, but also landscapes and oceasopos and old houses and churches of which he could have found many similar examples." "Here," he concluded, "is the England... which our ancestors have seen and rejoiced in for so many passing generations" (Hoppé 1926:vii). This volume, in other words, stressed the commonplace, the old, the familiar, the traditional, the comfortable aspects of Britain. Even its industrial scenes have the look of long-abandoned archaeological sites. Its title was aptly chosen: *Picturesque Great Britain.*

**Figure 19** New York Type. Female, Holiday Mood (ca. 1921). (Modern print from the Richard Hoppé Collection.)

**Figure 20** New York Type. Male with Trilby (ca. 1921). (Modern print from the Richard Hoppé Collection.)

**Figure 21** Santa Barbara. In the Paseo (ca. 1926). *Romantic America*, pl. 157. (Mansell Collection, neg. 17460 T.) Hoppé seems to have been thoroughly boguiled by his experience of the Santa Barbara Fiesta, perhaps exaggerating its Hispanicism (see Hoppe 1934:237–241).
Figure 22  Philadelphia. Span of the Delaware Bridge (1926). Romantic America, pl. 30. (Maneell Collection, neg. 17243 D.) In 1927 this bridge had the longest single span of any in the world.
The Spirit of America

In the case of Britain Hoppe could rely on a familiarity between people and place that was understood, even taken for granted, but in his views of the United States, especially of American cities, he was after something else. That something was not mere newness, even futurity, of the sort which saw the great Flatiron Building of 1902 with its front "lifted to the future" while "on the past, its back [was] turned" (Edgar Saltus in Corn 1973:60). Hoppe's friend Joseph Pennell did a series of etchings for a book by John van Dyke with the fetching title The New New York (1909), but Hoppe himself was not drawn by such assertions of modernity—at least, not for their own sake. Here is the remainder of his description of the impact upon himself of American cities:

Despite modernistic architecture, their effect on me was one of monumental primitiveness, vividly calling to my mind the communal dwellings of ancient Taos, in New Mexico, but enlarged to a gigantic scale. When I looked at these palaces of commerce I felt that in their hard angles and uncompromising verticals dwell the spirit of a now romance. [Hoppe 1045:187]

The juxtaposition of Indian pueblo and modern skyscraper is suggestive (see Figures 23 and 24) and, as may be witnessed in his 1930 Australian exhibition, was deliberately pointed out by Hoppe himself. And it was more than a matter of the skyscraper being seen as a truly native architecture answering the architecture of the continent's own native inhabitants. The review of Romantic America cited above (see note 3) described the arrangement of the book as a kind of historical progression rather than as a geographical, physical circle: "The reader is taken back to the earliest known civilization on the continent north of the Rio Grande, and from there by various stages to scenes representative of all that is modern in our present day mode of living. If Hoppe's own comments on the congruence of ancient and modern forms are to be given any credence, the book's movement was not linear, but circular, spiritually circular, and, throughout, the spirit which intused it was that of "romance."

Hoppe, however, did not make these American cities mysterious and conventionally romantic by seeing them through haze of one sort or another. This is interesting, especially when we remember Hoppe's credentials as a noted pictorialist, someone admired by such unreconstructed pictorialists as Gertrude Käsebier. Henry James, one of Hoppe's portrait subjects and a severe critic of New York, had conceded that the city was "in certain lights almost charming," that is, "when an element of mystery and wonder had entered into the impression" (quoted in Corn 1973:61). At the turn of the century Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen had provided that mys-
lery and wonder by depicting the city soiled by snow, blurred by dusk, veiled in mist, or reflected by an uneven sheen of wet pavements. Even Joseph Pennell had done this in many of his New York vistas, so that his most likely influence on Huppé was not in his city pictures, but in his views of American industries. Huppé depicted American industries not in all their own particularities but under such catch-all generic labels as "Steel and Smoke" (see Figures 25 and 26). In his city views, on the other hand, Huppé usually did depict the "hard angles" and "uncompromising verticals" that we often associate with abstraction. The major exception to this were his evocative nighttime photographs, where floods of electric light redeem a darkness punctuated by the pulsations of smaller lights, casting an air of transitory ineffability over the whole scene (see Figure 13).
Cities of Abstraction

Speaking of artistic views and versions of New York, Peter Conrad (1984:110) quipped, "The city of realism is congested. Abstracted New York is empty." Hoppé, ever restless, exhibited tendencies toward both realism and abstraction, perhaps attaining neither. Let us look at some of the tendencies toward abstraction.

The caption to New York City, In the West Street District (see Figure 27) reads, "Dockland on the North River and a centre for the Transatlantic Lines and ferries," but the photograph itself says nothing about the business—certainly not the business—of docks and mass transportation. What human presence there is—the unemphasized fruit stall and the scattered, seemingly aimless figures, all in the bottom strip of the picture—is reduced to insignificance by the great triangular divisions of the total image. The photograph, in essence, becomes a study in shades of grey and black of triangles on a flat, two-dimensional plane, so much so that the biggest building in sight loses what in actuality must have been considerable three-dimensional mass, is flattened, so to speak, by
the lines of the dominant triangles in the design.

In other images a deliberate two-dimensionality was achieved differently. A view of Fifth Avenue not included in *Romantic America* (see Figure 28) subtly suggests that the avenue actually runs upward into the sky like the church spire that appears to be in the same plane beside it. In one picture of Manhattan's West 30th Street, Hoppe's sheer technical virtuosity produced an analogous result (see Figure 29). The fact that there is no much depth or breadth of focus, with hardly any sense of perspective in the verticals of the buildings, means that the total view, holding within it the height of some thirteen stories, is all equally sharp. Despite the illusion of three dimensionality conferred upon them by a light layer of snow, the horizontal lines of the picture accentuate, rather than detract from, the patterning effect of the overall grid of lines. Aerial views, such as Hoppe's depiction of what was then the most concentrated oil field in the world (see Figure 30), almost necessarily flatten, in this case to present a complex irregular design of oil derricks miniaturized.

In an almost surreal photograph of smoke and chimneys (see Figure 31), a wooden trestle and its stanchions form frames within the frame, turning the background activity into two separate scenes. Similar internal framing devices were employed in *New York City View over Central Park* (see Figure 32), in a shot of the Woolworth building that transforms it into a veritable "cathedral of commerce" (see Figure 33), and, most strikingly, in the view of a Mississippi steamboat at St. Louis (see Figure 34), where the huge black girder across the top of the image creates a marked tension with the bridge itself, receding in perspective across the river. Hoppe's image of New York City seen between the cables of the Brooklyn Bridge (Figure 1) is, perhaps, the most obvious of all: it is interesting that Peter Conrad, who also cited Hoppe, devoted a whole chapter to the notion of the city seen through the Brooklyn Bridge. As it does in Hoppe's image, the bridge, he claimed, "analyzes the city, proposing itself to the artist as a mediator between his subjective retreat and the throng of clamoring objects which is downtown Manhattan" (Conrad 1984:223).

Hoppe himself, of course, realized the vital significance of the frame. "The search for the most effective angle is the prime task of the photographer," he said, "and his success will largely be judged by his success in that search" (see note 1 above). Sometimes he narrowed the frame so much that contextualization was limited, forcing attention to details that, thus presented, take on the force of abstract forms. It is interesting that in *Impressions of New Orleans* (1926) Arnold Genthe—the photographer A. D. Coleman proposed as the most appropriate American counterpart for Hoppe (Hall-Durian 1982:6–7)—saw the Vieux
Figure 29  New York City. West 30th Street (ca. 1926). *Romantic America*, pl. 12. (Mansell Collection, neg. 15423-261.)

Figure 30  California. Oil Field (ca. 1925). (Mansell Collection, neg. 17462-R.)

Figure 31  Untitled (ca. 1921). (Mansell Collection, neg. 15423-222.)

Figure 32  New York City. View over Central Park (ca. 1926). (Modern print, Richard Hoppé Collection.)
Carried as essentially old, veiled, private, full of slightly out-of-focus traceries of iron and dark entrances that opened onto darker courtyards. Hoppé, by contrast, viewed it frontally, usually in strong sunlight, and caught the hardness of wrought iron. A good example of the use of limited frame is his depiction of windows and shutters there (see Figure 4), a picture that seems to foreshadow Berenice Abbott's versions of such aspects of New York in the following decade.¹³

Hoppé's study of a new bridge in Portland works on the same principle (see Figure 9). The frame is such that what holds our attention has nothing to do with the purpose of the structure before our eyes; indeed, were it not for the caption, its function might go unrecognized. The significance of the image seems to reside wholly in the arrangement of dark girders of varying thicknesses and angles, one to another; a complex pattern of black and white. A related pattern of curve echoing and inflecting curve was created by the juxtaposition of palm frond and Japanese-style roofshape in one of Hoppé’s Hollywood vistas (see Figure 35). Hoppé himself sometimes overtly hinted at this aspect of his work by his choice of titles: New York City, Squares and Angles for a New York view (see Figure 36) or Chicago, Rhythm in Stone (Romantic America, pl. 248) or Detroit, Confederates of Commerce for one of power plant chimneys severe enough to have come from the camera of Charles Sheeler, who did in fact produce virtually the same image the following year (see Figure 37).¹⁴
Hippé’s tendency toward abstraction was most clearly expressed, perhaps, in his many depictions of the New York elevated railway, only a tiny proportion of which found their way into Romantic America.

While he certainly represented the proximity of the EI structures to the tenements they stood among, such scenes were ones of stillness and emptiness rather than of congestion (see Figure 6). He was clearly intrigued by the contrasts of light and dark that the EI created and the unique structural forms that had been wrought by American engineers in the EI’s creation. One of his studies, from directly underneath (see Figure 38), powerfully presages the point of view that Walker Evans would adopt a couple of years later in his famous Brooklyn Bridge (1929); in both images the vantage point tends to transform a structure that was actually horizontal into a near-vertical one.15

This comparison may be instructive. Evans was totally in control of his image, there may well have been fortuitous elements in its creation, but the achieved image has an authoritative stamp, a stamp of inevitability upon it. In this particular view by Hippé the same claim could almost be made for him. Usually his images are compromised by the intrusion of random variables—figures so much in motion as to cause a blurred silhouette, reflections of uneven sharpness, and, of course, cars and bodies that mar possible symmetries in the total design (see Figures 6 and 39). In another sense though, such random elements, usually associated with the human presence, are also signs of realism.
Figure 37  Detroit, Confederates of Commerce (ca. 1926). Romantic America, pl. 262.
Figure 38  New York City. Second Avenue (ca. 1926). Romantic America, pl. 7. (Mansell Collection, neg. 15423-267.)
Figure 39  New York City. Under the El in Rain (ca. 1921). (Mansell Collection, neg. 15423-13.)

Figure 40  Colorado. Mexican Colony in Sugar Beet Area (ca. 1926). (Mansell Collection, neg. 17413-Q.)
Cities of Realism

Ian Jeffrey, in what probably constitutes the most perceptive critical essay on Hoppé to date, saw the qualifications to abstraction and modernism in his work as looming large enough to render his vision "archaic." "This is 'the modern' construed by a survivor," he concluded, "by an energetic Victorian who sees romance everywhere" (Jeffrey 1978:8). If Hoppé's abstraction was marred by elements of realism, his reaching after realism was also muted. He captured such time-bound sights as election posters for the midterm elections of 1926, but such views were not allowed to enter his Romantic America, and we have already seen that the dereliction of the Bowery was also excluded—even when surmounted and dwarfed by the massive symmetry of the Municipal Building. This was not wholly or even primarily a question of subject matter. It is true that Hoppé excluded the peeling adobe shacks of migrant Mexican farm laborers (see Figure 40), but he included the humble homes of Atlanta's black quarter. The difference was essentially one of style. In Figure 40 the image itself was untidy, while the other was composed; similarly, of two views of snow scenes in Middletown, Connecticut (see Figures 41 and 42), it was the one with the horse-drawn sleigh and all its lines of perspective contained within the frame (by a lovely snow-filled meadow) that was chosen for Romantic America.

"The picture," as Jeffrey put it, "was to be inclusive, taking in the extent and depth of the world, as landscape painting had done" (Jeffrey 1978:8). The two images selected aspired to such inclusive order.

An examination of the files of negatives in the Mansell Collection certainly bears out this contention. A notable example is formed by the two surviving views of the Civic Center in Baltimore (see Figures 43 and 44). In the first, which was not included in Romantic America, a car blunts the end of the outjutting steps or balcony. If the second image is looked at closely, it can be seen that it has been tidied further by the removal of discordant telephone poles and wires. (Hoppé, despite his several assertions that he did not like to manipulate, exercised a similar discretion in many other instances.)

In many of the most interesting of Hoppé's American images there was no need for retouching of this sort. There is in them a delicate tension between the tendencies toward abstraction and realism that we have already observed. Such pictures are poised on the balance.

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Figure 41 Connecticut. Midwinter at Middletown (ca. 1926). Romantic America, pl. 283. (Mansell Collection, neg. 17571-B.)

Figure 42 Connecticut. Middletown in Winter (ca. 1926). (Mansell Collection, neg. 17571-C.)
Hoppé’s view of Chicago. *Washington Street from Wabash Avenue* (see Figure 45), for instance, is both an image of movement and of pattern. The lamppost and grey shadow on the left match the wall of dark shadow on the right; a telegraph pole (itself lined up precisely with the edge of Burnham & Hoot’s graceful Reliance Building behind) lies equidistant between them; and the rectangle of light in the right half offers release, space, to the spire, allowing it to pierce the sky almost to the top of the frame, as if aspiring upward. One of the New York vistas, *New York City. 57th Street* (see Figure 46), works along very similar lines. The masses (and precise forms) of dark balance—and, along the edge of the awning, exactly mesh with—the masses and forms of grey. And, at the same time, the rich and their chauffeurs carry on their exclusive lives.

Hoppé depicted La Salle Street, Chicago, as full of bustle, commuters dashing this way and that, shop-poles hauling heavy bago, two levels of train or streetcars, and three cronies in the bottom right corner chattering (see Figure 47). Interestingly enough, several of the people feature strongly in the more abstract elements of the image. For instance, in 1926 many men wore light, straw boaters, and Hoppé managed to make something of the halo of sunlight they caught: as our eyes fill from one hat to another, the hats are linked together as an unemphatic principle of order. Another such principle is formed by the line of lamps that itself accentuates the row of pillars supporting the elevated tracks of the loop.

**The Spirit of a New Romance**

Hoppé succeeded in making his rendition of the entrance hall to Grand Central Station, New York, work in a number of different modes simultaneously (see Figure 48). It presents and represents the age of urban transit—the sense of travelers moving along predetermined individual axes, alien one from another—with supreme economy. Like the travelers in his La Salle Street image, their individual positions seem inexplicably random, yet we sense an underlying pattern. Hoppé himself emphasized the abstract qualities of his Grand Central image: “I think it suggests movement, atmosphere and space” (Hoppé 1945:128). Yet most viewers, I suspect, would tend to read it symbolically. Its huge windows belong, surely, to the iconography of an earlier realism, and we see them, and the light rays they permit to beam upon walls and floor, as akin to those of magnificent cathedrals. If, as we witnessed, the Woolworth Building was transformed by Hoppé into the exterior of a cathedral of commerce, Grand Central Station becomes its interior, and its commuting citizens the communicants of what

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*Figure 43* Baltimore. The Civic Center (ca. 1920). (Mansell Collection, neg. 17563-C.)

Hoppé aptly envisioned as a new “spirit.” That spirit—*“the spirit,”* as he put it, *“of a new romance”—was as likely to light upon the pinnacles of skyscrapers as that of past ages upon the pinnacles of the Grand Canyon. In a manner however mysterious and undefined (and it was always undefined by Hoppé), its beneficence just as surely infused the girders of the El as that of the old one formed the Rainbow Bridge. To Hoppé, Romance, both ancient and modern, was everywhere—if you had the camera eye to see it.
Figure 44  Baltimore. The Civic Center (ca. 1926). Romantic America, pl. 300. (Mansell Collection, neg. 17563-D.)
Figure 45  Chicago, Washington Street from Wabash Avenue (ca. 1926). Romantic America, pl. 251.
Figure 46  New York City.
57th Street (ca. 1921).
Romantic America, pl. 11.
(Mansell Collection, neg. 15423-209.)
Figure 47  Chicago. La Salle Street (ca. 1926). Romantic America, pl. 253. (Monacil Collection, neg. 17459-0.)
Figure 48  New York City, Grand Central Station (1919). Romantic America, pl. 18. (Mansell Collection, neg. 15423-169.)
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Notes

1 From the typescript foreword to autobiographical notes (the content and order of which are very similar to Hundred Thousand Exposures [1945], Hoppe’s published autobiography) in the Richard Hoppe Collection. The same material appears in the uncorrected proofs of a paper, “Before the Lens: A Camera Odyssey,” delivered at the Royal Society of Arts, London, on April 24, 1946; these proofs are in the Library of the Royal Photographic Society, Bath.

2 Hoppe, “Book 16.174114 to 18131 28/7/26 10/28,” Mansell Collection, London. Much of the information in this essay does not appear in Hoppe’s writings or the critical commentary upon him was derived from these negative books. For images destined for the “Pictorial California” feature, see Figures 8 and 13.

3 Review of Romantic America by W. C. Faust, a newspaper clipping in the Richard Hoppe Collection.

4 See Hoppe 1945:90–99. The Richard Hoppe Collection contains numerous newspaper clippings on Hoppe’s role in the twenties as a judge of women’s beauty, several of them commenting on the disproportionate number of American faces among his selections.

5 It is interesting that Hoppe, in talking to Bill Jay, divided his career into three phases, with the first division in 1925, even though in his extreme old age he did not specifically recall his topographical work (see Jay’s essay in this issue of Studies).

6 MacDonald in Hoppe, March 14, 1921, Richard Hoppe Collection. From this and other documents in Richard Hoppe’s possession, it appears that MacDonald—who had been the American organizer of the Dresden exhibition—was helpful in establishing Hoppe on the New York photographic scene. For a brief biography of MacDonald, who seems to have viewed himself as Hoppe’s American opposite number in portrait photography, see Reaton and Runkle 1975:115.

7 See Bill Jay’s essay in this issue of Studies.


9 Information from various brochures, in several languages, in the Richard Hoppe Collection.

10 It is noteworthy that, despite an ever-increasing rate of urbanization and suburbanization in Britain, Hoppe continued to represent Britain, even London, in the same manner through succeeding books. See especially London, with its “London Montage” section (Hoppe 1932): A Camera on Unknown London, which is fully of particularly intimate photographs (Hoppe 1936); and Rural London in Pictures, which, as Lord Latham said in his foreword, satisfies “that zest for the country which persists in Englishman no matter how much his daily round is circumscribed in industry and limited by the necessities of town” (Hoppe 1951:9). The fact that Hoppe also used the word “picturesque”—though I think in its looser sense of “picturesque”—in the subtitle to Romantic America: Picturesque United States (partly, perhaps, to link it commercially to the British volume) does not invalidate this point.

11 Pictures 40 and 42 in the Australian exhibition were titled, respectively, American Architecture, 30th Century and American Architecture, 10th Century; information from The First Exhibition in Australia of Camera Pictures by E. O. Hoppe (Sydney: David Jones [Department Store], 1930) a catalog in the Richard Hoppe Collection.

12 There are two letters from Käsebier to Hoppe in the Richard Hoppe Collection, dated March 15, 1921, and December 18, 1926, which clearly indicate mutual respect.

13 I am thinking of such Abbott images as Warehouse, Brooklyn, May 1936, reproduced, among other places, in Lyons 1966: pl. 3.


15 Evans’s Brooklyn Bridge is reproduced, among other places, in Conrad 1964:233.

16 I happen to think that almost all art photography exhibits this tension to some degree (see Gidley 1963:37).

17 In the David Jones catalog (see note 11 above) pictures 43 and 45 were titled Pinnacles (Zion’s Canyon, Utah) and Pinnacles (New York City), respectively.

References


• Hall-Duncan, Nancy 1982 E. O. Hoppe: 100,000 Exposures (catalog). With an appreciation by A. D. Coleman. New York: The Photo Center Gallery, New York University School of Arts.


• 1934 Round the World with a Camera. With 102 photographs. London: Hutchinson.


Appendix: Reprinting Some Negatives of E. O. Hoppé

The negatives made available for reprinting are contained in individual envelopes, some of the usual translucent variety and some manila. So far as may be seen, there has been no damage caused by print through from glue lines on the seams. Several envelopes contain rough contact prints, and there are a few annotations, suggesting methods of printing.

The negatives themselves are on film, made somewhat awkward to handle by having been hand cut from larger pieces. The longer dimension is typically between four and five inches, and the shorter is figured proportionately. The film base is mechanically sound, if sometimes yellowed or a little corrugated. Bronzing, staining, and mechanical abrasion are widespread but not often severe in their results.

Hoppé's retouching proved to be a major constraint in the reprinting exercise. It had been done principally in red crayon, applied vigorously enough to indent the negatives, and was used to emphasize structural features, such as bridge girders, or to manipulate tone and texture. Once or twice, Hoppé had scratched quite roughly into the film surface.

Whereas, in the absence of reliable original photographs (rather than gravures), I had anticipated problems in determining what might be termed a tone of voice for the new prints, my need to select contrast and density to minimize the obtusiveness of the retouching marks in itself limited my options; I found myself forced away from the temptation to try for modern solutions into a low key mode more typical of the earlier part of the century, though it is true that this may have "darkened" Hoppé's own vision.

Considering that I had resolved initially not to seek an archaic rendering, because I believe that changes in materials and optics are likely to make such a strategy discordant, it was a matter for surprise and interest to find myself moving "naturally" in that direction. Furthermore, as I worked through the negatives, I realized that there was a third factor in the convergence: Hoppé's frequently adopted slight defocusing, or soft focus, required fine tuning of the print toward a period atmosphere if it was to be seen as a positive contribution, rather than an imperfection.

The question of afterwork on the reprints is a vexed one. Many of the imperfections of age are untreatable, and any attempt at restoration of defects would inevitably bring me up against decisions around further disguise for Hoppé's handwork. I therefore resolved that the proper course of action for me was to let well enough alone and do no more than offer acceptable interpretations of the present state of the material, without artifice or concealment.

No doubt my evaluations of his negatives will prove different from Hoppé's own, insofar as his can be determined from surviving prints and images in gravure form. Equally, my own views will change to some extent, but given the sense of internal consistency fostered during the course of the work, I do not expect the shift to be substantial.

Philip Stokes
III. Chronology—E. O. Hoppé

Terence Pepper

1878 Born in Munich on April 11.
1900 Moves to London, where he works in the Deutsche Bank and takes up photography as a hobby.
1903 Joins Royal Photographic Society.
1905 Marries Marion Bliersbach.
1905–07 Regular prizewinner and exhibitor at photographic exhibitions.
1907 Opens his first studio at 10 Marquavine Gardens, near Barons Court.
1909 With Sir Benjamin Stone, represents Britain at International Exhibition of Photography at Dresden.
1910 First one-man exhibition of 72 photographs at Royal Photographic Society, in April.
1911 Moves to larger studio at 59 Baker Street. Photographs leading members of the Diaghilev Ballet.
1913 One-man exhibition at Goupil Gallery, in February. Moves to Millais House, 7 Cromwell Place, South Kensington.
1914 New art magazine, Colour, launched; Hoppé is art editor and contributes reviews, designs, and drawings.
1916 British edition of Vogue published for the first time; Hoppé contributes editorial and society photographs to early issues.
1917 Founder and committee member of “The Plough” theater club.
1919–21 Several visits to the USA; takes portrait sittings in his New York studio on 57th Street.
1921 Photographs George V and Queen Mary.
1922 Major one-man show, of 221 exhibits, at Goupil Gallery (catalog introduction by John Galsworthy), in January. International Theatre Exhibition at Victoria and Albert Museum, in June-July; Hoppé on organizing committee and contributes stage and costume designs.
1923 Visits Rumania, as guest of Queen Marie and Rumanian royal family, to collect material for his first travel book, In Gipsy Camp and Royal Palace.

1924 Travels to Italy; photographs Mussolini in Rome for The Graphic. Commissioned by J. Lyons & Co. to photograph the first “Nippy.”
1925 Travels around Britain and Ireland.
1926 Returns to America; takes portraits in New York, visits Hollywood, and spends time with Indian tribes. Visits Cuba, Jamaica, and West Indies.
1929 Travels to India, Ceylon, Australia, and New Zealand.
1930 Exhibition “79 Camera Pictures” held at David Jones’s Department Store, Sydney.
1931–39 Travels to Dutch East Indies, Bali, Indonesia, Africa, Bavaria, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.
1939 Returns to London at outbreak of war. Concentrates on Doreen Leigh as a photographic agency.
1954 Exhibition “A Half Century of Photography” at Foyle’s Art Gallery opened by James Lavor (exhibition later shown at Lenbachhaus, Munich, and then toured by British Council in India and the Far East).
1968 Small exhibition held by Kodak to mark Hoppé’s ninetieth birthday.
1972 Dies on December 9, age ninety-four.

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IV. Bibliography—E. O. Hoppé

Terence Pepper


1922 Book of Fair Women, by E. O. Hoppé, introduction by Richard King. London: Cape. 32 hand-tipped photogravure plates by Hoppé (limited edition of 560 numbered copies). (Also published in America by Knopf and in Munich by Bruckman as Die schöne Frauen, with text by Franz Biel; the Bruckman edition had four additional plates by Minya Diez-Duhrkoop of Hamburg.)

Taken from Life, by John Davys Beresford and E. O. Hoppé. London: Collins. 216 pp., including 7 photogravure plates by Hoppé.


1924 In Gipsy Camp and Royal Palace: Wanderings in Rumanaia. Written and illustrated by E. O. Hoppé, preface by the Queen of Rumanaia, decorations by Bold. London: Methuen. 240 pp., including 32 plates by Hoppé.


1929 Romantik der Kleinstadt (Cities Time Has Passed By). Munich: Bruckman. 176 plates by Hoppé.


1934 Round the World with a Camera. Written and illustrated by F. O. Hoppé. London: Hutchinson. 256 pp., including 102 photographs.


1937 London of George VI. Written and illustrated by E. O. Hoppé. London: Dent. 120 pp., including 66 photographs by Hoppé.

1940 Country Days, by A. G. Street (taken from his BBC broadcasts), with 8 photographs by Hoppé. London: Faber.


