

## ART MARKET UPDATES

### Secret girlfriend's letters shed new light on Edward Hopper's oeuvre

An exhibition of 20 original letters from Alta Hilsdale (1884-1948) to Edward Hopper (1882-1967) provides insight into the couple's previously unknown relationship and offers a new context for understanding the work Hopper created during the decade the letters span—1904 to 1914.

This stash of nearly 60 original letters written by Hilsdale, Hopper's friend and romantic interest, is a tantalizing discovery. In early 2009 art historian Elizabeth Thompson Colleary was the first to study the letters, which were found in the attic of Hopper House, the artist's childhood home, in Nyack, New York. Colleary has now curated *My Dear Mr. Hopper: The Story Starts Here*, an exhibition at the Edward Hopper House Art Center that argues that the letters' contents should significantly update our

understanding of the reclusive American painter's work.

"When you reframe the art within the context of these letters," remarks Colleary, "you see that the way the couples interact in Hopper's imagery is born of his personal experience."

Hopper's association with Hilsdale was significant not only for its duration, but also because Hopper had only two other documented girlfriends before his marriage to Josephine Nivison. However, there is no record that Hopper shared Hilsdale's existence in his life with anyone, perhaps because of her recurrent snubs.

The exhibition's wall text guides visitors in understanding how the letters have illuminated several of Hopper's most enigmatic images. "You read the letters," continues Colleary. "You look



These secret letters were discovered in the attic of Hopper House.

at what they tell us about his emotional life during one of his earliest romantic pursuits. Then you line up the artwork and you see the story unfold."

*My Dear Mr. Hopper: The*

*Story Starts Here* runs through October 20 at the Edward Hopper House Art Center, 82 N. Broadway, in Nyack, New York. For more information, call (845) 358-0774.

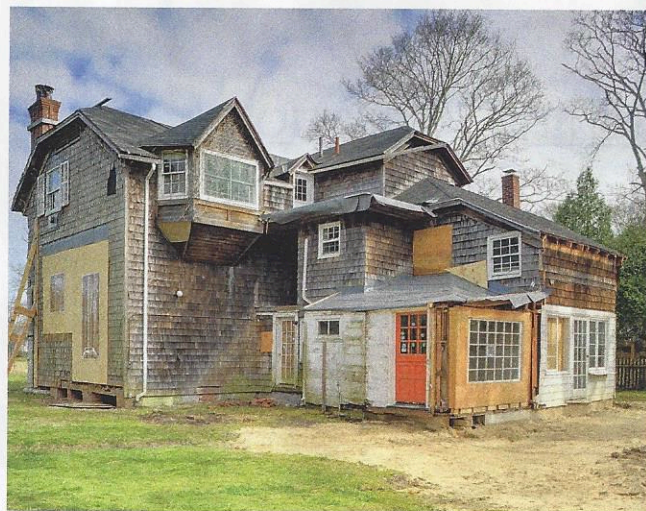
### Historic Thomas Moran House awaits reconstruction process

Once the cultural hub of East Hampton, New York, the historic Thomas Moran House has become infested with rodents and is structurally unsound. Many of the walls and floors sport gaping holes and the entire structure has actually tilted a full 7 inches toward the street.

Originally built in 1885 by well-known American landscape painter Thomas

Moran as a studio and summer cottage, the uninhabitable dwelling will receive a facelift by custom builders John Hummel and Associates of East Hampton.

The local community and the Thomas Moran Trust joined forces to save East Hampton's first artist's studio and the fundraising and planning phases for the home's reconstruction have begun.



Custom builders John Hummel and Associates of East Hampton, New York, will give the historic Thomas Moran House a much-needed facelift. Courtesy John Hummel and Associates.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FOSTER