

UE602

CIVILISATION

TRAINING THE VIEWER'S EYE

DEVOIR SUR TABLE

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Read the following extract written by Robert Hughes, “Art: Stuart Davis: The City Boy's Eye” and published in *Time Magazine*, March 20, 1978. Then do an in-depth analysis of the two paintings in relation to this article. You can also draw links and parallels with other American artists.

"Stuart Davis: Art and Art Theory," which finishes its run at the Brooklyn Museum this week and will open on April 15 at the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, Mass., is an exhilarating show. Davis died 14 years ago, but he is still a quintessentially American artist—the hero of the struggle to be both modernist and American that pervaded the art world in the '20s and '30s. No exhibition of his work has ever done as well by him as this one, organized by Art Historian John R. Lane: 113 paintings and drawings, an excellent catalogue text and, for the first time, a full view of the relationships between theory and practice that lay at the core of Davis' work and enabled him to transcend his provinciality.

Davis loathed American regionalism —Thomas Hart Benton with his buckeye Michelangelo plowboys, Grant Wood's Midwestern Arcadias. "The only corn-fed art that was ever successful was the pre-Columbian," Davis snapped in 1934. His own vision of America as subject was much broader. It took in "wood-and ironwork of the past; Civil War and skyscraper architecture; the brilliant colors on gasoline stations, chain store fronts and taxicabs," as well as "Earl Hines' hot piano and Negro jazz music in general." His desire, he wrote, "is to construct formal souvenirs which are an agreeable emblem" of the "speeds and spaces of the American environment." In its voracious inclusiveness (admitting, as subject, anything American from landscape to 5 and 10¢ store kitchen utensils), Davis' imagination cast long shadows—toward abstract expressionism on one hand, toward Pop and its neon-lit landscape of signs and artifacts on the other [...].



Grant Wood, *Stone City*, 1930



Stuart Davis, *The Terminal*, 1937 (oil on canvas, 76, 4 cm x 101, 6 cm)

