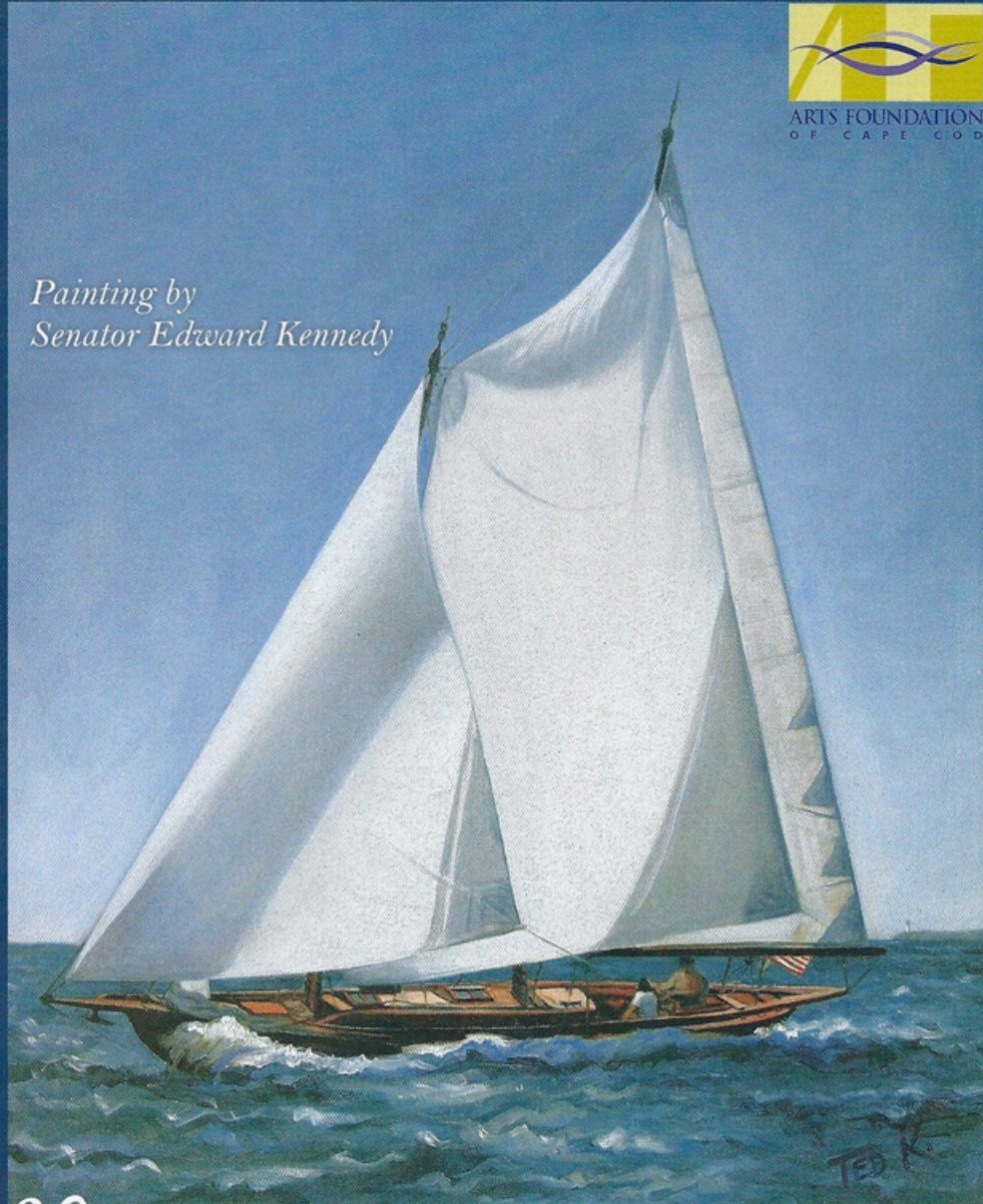


Art OF THE CAPE & ISLANDS

CAPE COD ■ MARTHA'S VINEYARD ■ NANTUCKET ■ SOUTH COAST ■ SOUTH SHORE



*Painting by
Senator Edward Kennedy*



30
YEARS

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October, oil on panel, 28" x 42"

In Hopper's footsteps

by susan dewey

It is an artist's dream. For several weeks every other summer, Philip Koch gets to paint in Edward Hopper's Cape Cod home. Surrounded by the stunning simplicity of land, sea, and sky that brought light to Hopper's art from a small studio perched on top of a South Truro sand dune, Koch has found his art's home.

It was as a young boy on the shores of Lake Ontario that Koch first believed that the nature all around him needed to be held close through art, before it vanished in a day's instant. Still, it would take years sharpening his skills as a student of abstract art at Ohio's Oberlin College, and eventually, as a professor of figurative drawing at Maryland Institute College of Art, before Koch knew that capturing the timelessness of nature in landscapes was his life's work.

Thirty-five of Koch's landscapes, which will be featured in a nationally touring show called "Unbroken Thread: Nature Paintings and the American Imagination" this summer, could be images from another era, or depictions of a fantasy world that never existed. Perhaps that is why he was first drawn to Cape Cod 40 years ago, attracted to the fragile spit of land's ever-changing, always renewing coastline.

"I do paintings that exist outside of any particular time," says Koch. "The work I do on the Cape nowadays is how the Cape might have looked 50,000 years ago—or perhaps 50,000 years from now. I like the idea of painting a landscape that exists outside of time."

For Koch, that sense of timelessness, of nature's unending power, is reinforced



Ascension, oil on panel, 40" x 32"



Banner, oil on panel, 40" x 32"

when he is fortunate enough to spend several summer weeks painting in Hopper's studio. "The family who owns the studio saw my work for sale in a Wellfleet gallery," says Koch. "They started collecting my paintings and eventually invited me to come and work in Hopper's studio."

During his many visits to Hopper's studio, which began in 1983, Koch has been literally surrounded by the artist's world. "It is very interesting, because the family has pretty much preserved the studio with lots of Hopper's effects—even some of his brushes are there," says Koch. "There are big windows that capture a lot of light, and cast long shadows . . . like his paintings. It is a little spooky, also like his paintings."

Koch says it is a privilege to work in the studio, especially since Hopper was a great influence on his development as a young painter. "One of the lessons that I learned from Hopper is to follow your own drummer," says Koch, whose boldly colored panoramas feature solid forms and vibrant colors rendered in oil, soft pastels, and vine charcoal with a slightly off-edge imaginative power.

"I am trying to take some of the early modernist excitement that I had in college for simple flat shapes and bright colors and reexamine the tradition of American realist painting," says Koch, who says his favorite thing to paint is the ocean. "The ocean is one of the great universal hooks that grabs peoples' hearts."

Koch says he is honored that the Cape Cod Museum of Art in Dennis will host his national "Unbroken Thread" show, which will run from June 20 to August 16. "I want to share my decade-long fascination with Cape Cod's uniqueness," says Koch. "This is where I learned to paint and being here has been crucial in my development. For me, this show is about coming full circle."

Philip Koch's works may be seen at the George Billis Gallery, Manhattan, the Isalos Fine Art, Stonington, ME, and on his Web site, www.philipkoch.com.

Susan Dewey is the editor of ART of the Cape & Islands.