

Edvard Munch (1863-1944)

Source: <http://www.edvardmunch.org/>

Edvard Munch is best known as being a Norwegian born, expressionist painter, and printer. In the late 20th century, he played a great role in German expressionism, and the art form that later followed; namely because of the strong mental anguish that was displayed in many of the pieces that he created.

Edvard Munch was born in Norway in 1863, and was raised in Christiania (known as Oslo today). Only a few years after he was born, Edvard Munch's mother died of tuberculosis in 1868, and he was raised by his father. Edvard's father suffered of mental illness, and this played a role in the way he and his siblings were raised.

In 1885, Edvard Munch traveled to Paris, and was extremely influenced by impressionism artists [Claude Monet](#), [Edouard Manet](#), and followed by the post-impressionism artists [Van Gogh](#), [Paul Cezanne](#), and [Gauguin](#). In fact, the main style of Munch's work is [post-impressionism](#), and focused on this style.

Much of the work which Edvard Munch created, was referred to as the style known as symbolism. This is mainly because of the fact that the pieces which he created, and the paintings he made, focused on the internal view of the objects, as opposed to the exterior, and what the eye could see. He would design many of his pieces around the way he felt, or the emotions he was repressing, which caused his work to showcase inward feeling, and more of a personal sense of art, as opposed to the external view, and the way everyone else would see the piece, which he was portraying in any piece that he was designing.

Much of his work depicts life and death scenes, love and terror, and the feeling of loneliness. These emotions were depicted by the contrasting lines, the darker colors, blocks of color, somber tones, and a concise and exaggerated form, which depicted the darker side of the art which he was designing. In 1909 he decided to return to his hometown, and go back to Norway. During this period, much of the work that was created by Edvard Munch depicted his interest in nature, and it was also noted that the tones and colors that he used in these pieces, did add more color, and seemed a bit more cheerful, than most of the previous works he had created in years past. The pessimistic under toning which was quite prominent in much of his earlier works, had faded quite a bit, and it seems he took more of a colorful, playful, and fun tone with the pieces that he was creating, as opposed to the dark and somber style which he tended to work with earlier on during the course of his career. From this period, up to his death, Edvard Munch remained in Norway. Edvard Munch passed away in 1944. Upon his death, the works which he had created, were not given to family, but they were instead donated to the Norwegian government, and were placed in museums, in shows, and in various local public buildings in Norway. Due to the fact that all of this work which Edvard Munch had created, was donated to the Norwegian government, the country decided to build the [Munch Museum of Art](#).

"Nature is not only all that is visible to the eye... it also includes the inner pictures of the soul."

Why the sky was red in Munch's "The Scream"

For those who have ever wondered why the sky was a lurid red in "The Scream" -- Edvard Munch's painting of modern angst -- astronomers have an answer. They blame it on a volcanic eruption half a world away.

In the first detailed analysis of what inspired the painting, an article published Tuesday in *Sky and Telescope* pinpointed the location in Norway where Munch and his friends were walking when the artist saw the blood-red sky depicted in the 1893 painting, and offered an explanation for why the sky seemed to be aflame.

Donald Olson, a physics and astronomy professor at Texas State University, and his colleagues determined that debris thrown into the atmosphere by the great eruption at the island of Krakatoa, in modern Indonesia, created vivid red twilights in Europe from November 1883 through February 1884.

The local newspaper in what is now Oslo reported that the phenomenon was widely seen, the astronomers said.

Olson and his colleagues suggest that Munch drew his inspiration for the sky in the painting from these volcanic twilights, and not from his own imagination.

The most famous version of "The Scream" was painted in 1893 as part of "The Frieze of Life," a group of works derived by Munch's personal experiences, including the deaths of his mother in 1868 and his sister in 1877. These works were created in the 1890s, but have established origins in earlier decades.

To reach their conclusion, the astronomers determined Munch's vantage point in the painting.

"One of the high points of our research trip to Oslo came when we rounded a bend in the road and realized we were standing in the exact spot where Munch had been 120 years ago," Olson recalled in a statement.

"It was very satisfying to stand in the exact spot where an artist had his experience," he said. "The real importance of finding the location, though, was to determine the direction of view in the painting. We could see that Munch was looking to the southwest -- exactly where the Krakatoa twilights appeared in the winter of 1883-84."

Copyright 2003 [Reuters](#).

Discussion Questions

“The Scream”
Edvard Munch

How does this painting make you feel? Afraid, nervous, silly?

How do you think the artist felt when he painted this?

How are lines and color used to express feelings?

Point out the lines of perspective: the railing, the line around the pond. How do those lines lead to important parts of the painting?

Have you ever seen a “parody” of this painting? (Mask in the “Scream” movie, “Home Alone”)

Read the article “Why the Sky is Red in Munch’s “The Scream” to the class. Munch may not even have known why the sky was so red. How can a natural phenomenon affect how we feel?

Suggested Activities

1. Make your own “Scream”

Materials: drawing paper, black markers, colored pencils

Lead your students through the drawing of the head and hands of the screaming man in Munch's work. Once students finish the drawings, have them outline the "screamer" with a black marker.

Using items (not people) that make the students want to scream, have the students do drawings of things around the screaming man. Emphasize the importance of this being personal and how to NOT use people, etc.

When they are finished drawing, have the students add color. Remind students to color heavy, dark and to fill their page.

2. Expressing feelings through art.

Materials: paper, chalk, crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.

Explain that Munch made several versions of the scream. If possible, show them using the webpage:

<http://www.walltowatch.com/view/6819/5+versions+of+%22The+Scream%22>

Have students draw a picture, which expresses how they are feeling right now.

Explain that they may use whatever style and materials fit their feelings.