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Edvard Munch, Red and White, 1899–1900. Photo: © MUNICH, Oslo / Halvor Bjørngård



Edvard Munch

Magic of the North

15.9.23 – 22.1.24

**BERLINISCHE
GALERIE
MUSEUM OF
MODERN ART**



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Edvard Munch, Red and White, 1895–1900
Photo: © MUNICH, Oslo / Halvor Blomgård



Edvard Munch

Magic of the North

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Edvard Munch (1863–1944) threw down a gauntlet to his contemporaries with the radical modernity of his art. The provocation was especially blatant in Berlin, where the Norwegian symbolist exerted a powerful influence on the art scene as the old century gave way to the new. This exhibition, designed in collaboration with Munchmuseet in Oslo, uses 90 paintings, prints and photographs to narrate the relationship between the Norwegian artist and the German capital.

Thomas Köhler, Director Berlinische Galerie: “Edvard Munch was central to paving the way for modernism. And far too few people know this, but the Norwegian artist had a big influence on the Berlin art scene in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. An exhibition scandal made his name in 1892, ten years later he was famous all over Germany, and in 1927 the Nationalgalerie in Berlin finally dedicated the biggest retrospective to date to the Norwegian artist. This will be a unique opportunity to enjoy Munch’s top-class works in such abundance.”

Tone Hansen, Director MUNICH: “Germany was Edvard Munch’s breakthrough country and be-came an important market for the artist. Today, as a city of culture, Berlin is an important partner for Norway and we are incredibly proud that Munch is making his big return with such a well-curated exhibition. We look forward to further cooperation between our institutions and hope the exhibition also will lead to further interest in Norwegian art.”

The “Munch Affair“

In the late 19th century, Berlin was gripped by a fervour for everything Nordic. “Germany’s best, all the creative literature around the turn of the century, succumbed to the magical enchantment of the North,” recalled writer Stefan Zweig in 1925. The fascination spread to the fine arts, prompting the Association of Berlin Artists to invite Munch, still largely unknown, to stage a solo exhibition in November 1892. The suggestion had come from another Norwegian artist, Adelsteen Normann, a resident of both Berlin and Norway. Normann specialised in popular fjord landscapes that sold extremely well. Indeed, the German Kaiser – Wilhelm II – was among his customers.

Berlin’s art community was not very progressive back in the early 1890s. Mainstream taste was governed by prestige and tradition, an attitude that was championed by Wilhelm II and the influential painter Anton von Werner, who presided over the above-mentioned Verein Berliner Künstler. The 55 works by Munch that went on display at the House of Architects on Wilhelmstrasse were so avant-garde and alien that they hit the art community like a meteorite and tore it in two. Established members of the association were outraged and applied to have the exhibition closed down at once. And so, only a few days after the opening, the show was dismantled again. The “Munch Affair”, as it was ironically tagged by the press, marked the advent of modern art in the city. Munch, not yet thirty, revelled in the unexpected publicity. He wrote home: “It is, by the way, the best thing that could happen, I can have no better advertisement.” He moved at once to the banks of the Spree, where he spent several long periods living and working between 1892 and 1908 before settling in Norway from 1909.

Munch’s early Berlin years

While Berlin looked to the North with wistful longing in the late 19th century, Scandinavians were just as drawn to the modern capital of the recently united German Reich. Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg and Ola Hansson, whose works were harshly criticised and even censored back home, found their niche in Berlin, with opportunities to publish their books or perform their plays – for example, before an audience of interested subscribers at the Freie Bühne. Visual artists had many options to exhibit, while glittering bohemia met at the wine bar Zum schwarzen Ferkel. Adolf Paul, a writer with German, Swedish and Finnish roots who belonged to the close circle around

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Munch and Strindberg at the turn of the century, aptly summed up Munch's early Berlin years: "All the artists swear by Paris, and they may well be right. But they need – their art needs – a dose of Berlin to really prosper. [...] Of Munch, who learnt in Paris but burst forth in Berlin!"

True enough, Munch visited Paris several times from 1889, where he studied the works of the avant-garde, including Paul Gauguin, the Nabis and Vincent van Gogh. While symbolism played a pivotal role in Paris, Berlin was still dominated around 1900 by currents of naturalism and impressionism, and so there was little sympathy initially for Munch's symbolistic "painting of the future", as the artist himself once called it. And yet, over the years, Munch's career advanced decisively here by the Spree.

He was, among other things, a member of the Berlin Secession, the Deutscher Künstlerbund and later the Prussian Academy of Arts. Even if Munch's works were by this time on display at many international shows, Berlin remained one of the most important places in Europe in terms of his career, with about sixty exhibitions between 1892 and 1933, many of them solo shows. Here he found progressive intellectuals who valued and promoted his work.

"Life – Love – Jealousy – Madness – Fear – Death"

Berlin also gave Munch space to try out new ideas. In France in 1889 he had already made some preliminary notes about his magnum opus, which later came to be known as the "Frieze of Life". Under the title "Study for a series 'Love'", he first showed these pieces as a coherent sequence at an exhibition for which he hired two rooms in an office block on Unter den Linden in the winter of 1893/94 – a strategy that he was to repeat in 1895 at the Berlin gallery Ugo Barroccio.

In 1902, for an exhibition of the Berlin Secession, he built on the essential idea to produce his biggest series so far on the subject. "The themes revolved around 'life – love – jealousy – madness – fear – death'," observed Munch's friend Albert Kollmann. This version of the frieze contained 22 works and was displayed around all four walls of the Secession's Sculpture Room. As yet, however, the Berlin public had little experience of symbolism. It was too soon for Munch's contribution to be evaluated, let alone applauded. The art critic Hans Rosenhagen, writing in the journal "Die Kunst für alle", lamented: "They do not recognise that combining a brutal Nordic appetite for colour, ideas from Manet and a tendency to dream has given rise to something quite distinctive."

More variations and designs for friezes were to follow. In 1904, in Berlin, Munch painted a decorative sequence for a patron, the Lübeck art collector Max Linde. This later became known as the Linde Frieze. In 1906 he created stage sets for Ibsen's play "Ghosts" on behalf of Max Reinhardt, the Berlin-based theatre director, who also commissioned him to adorn an upstairs hall at the Kammerspiele, resulting in what we now call the Reinhardt Frieze. In 1913 the artist scored a huge success at the Berlin Secession when he showed his studies for a monumental frieze at the university lecture hall in Kristiania (now Oslo). Almost every organ of the Berlin press carried a favourable review. Munch's presence on Berlin's art scene changed the way people imagined the North. Now, instead of romantic or naturalistic fjord landscapes, they associated the Nordic world with highly charged emotions and strong colours.

Munch under the Nazis

By 1910 Munch's influence on the next generation of expressionists was a common topic in Berlin. This perception elevated his status to canonical. At the same time, his art was increasingly claimed as "Germanic". In 1927, the biggest exhibition to date devoted by a museum to Edvard Munch was organised by Ludwig Justi, the director of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, at the Kronprinzenpalais. According to the press, this show established his name in Berlin and Germany as a byword for a "specifically Nordic experience of the world".

After the National Socialists took power, Munch's art was exploited as "Nordic-Germanic", only to be discredited early on as "degenerate". Ten years after his triumph at the Nationalgalerie, 83 of his works were removed from public collections as part of the "Degenerate Art" campaign. After German troops occupied Norway on 9 April 1940, the 76-year-old drew up a will bequeathing all his works and papers to the City of Oslo. He cherished the hope that in so doing he could provide a home for his "Life Frieze" and make his work accessible to a wide audience.

Today we value Munch as a major protagonist of European modernism. His art transcends its time and still exerts an influence on the international art world, for his themes and his painting are as relevant as ever. And at the same time, Munch's work opened up a new perspective on the North. We see it through his eyes, associate it with his light, his colours and the melancholy spirit that was so characteristic of his art.



The exhibition features about 80 works by Edvard Munch, complemented by those of other artists who contributed in the late 19th century to shaping the way Berlin imagined the North and to forging a base in the city for modernist art, among them Walter Leistikow and Akseli Gallen-Kallela.

This exhibition enjoys the joint patronage of Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, and His Majesty King Harald V of Norway. It is a partnership between the Berlinische Galerie and the MUNCH, Oslo and with decisive support from the Kupferstichkabinett and Neue Nationalgalerie at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

Funded by the Capital Cultural Fund, the Norwegian Embassy Berlin, the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung and the International Music and Art Foundation in Vaduz. Opening during Berlin Art Week.

From 18 November 2023 until 1 April 2024, the Museum Barberini in Potsdam will be showing "Edvard Munch: Trembling Earth": museum-barberini.de

Exhibition catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue in German and English. Hirmer Publishers, 304 pages, 246 coloured illustrations, 21,7 x 28 cm, hardcover. Museum Edition: ISBN 978-3-940208-79-8, € 39.80 Book Trade Edition: ISBN 978-3-7774-4218-1, € 49.90

Programme

bg.berlin/en/programme/calendar

Outreach events

bg.berlin/en/programme/education

Audio guide

An audio guide to accompany the exhibition is available free of charge in German and English. It provides information and detailed audio descriptions of 19 key exhibits. Devices can be loaned on site. Users can also download a Web version onto their own smart phones: bg.berlin/audioguide-munch

Tickets

Tickets can be purchased at the museum entrance or online: bg.berlin/en/exhibitions/preview/edvard-munch/ticket-presale-munch

Kombiticket Berlinische Galerie and Barberini

In partnership with visitBerlin: bg.berlin/en/exhibitions/preview/edvard-munch/ticket-presale-munch

Cooperation with bahnhit.de

Train and hotel including a day ticket for the exhibition can be booked online: bahnhit.de/berlin/edvard-munch-ausstellung

Group bookings

For groups of 10 or more people or a school group, we offer time-slot tickets in advance: bg.berlin/en/exhibitions/preview/edvard-munch/ticket-presale-munch

Press images

berlinischegalerie.de/en/press-release/edvard-munch

Biography

Edvard Munch

1863

Edvard Munch is born on December 12 in the Norwegian municipality of Løten. Shortly after Edvard's birth, the family moves to the capital, Kristiania (now Oslo). Edvard is the second of five siblings. His father, Dr. Christian Munch, is a military physician. His mother, Laura Cathrine Munch, dies of tuberculosis when Munch is five. His older sister, Sophie, also dies of the same illness when just fifteen. After the death of his mother, her sister, Karen Bjølstad, takes care of the Munch children. Edvard's aunt encourages his artistic talent. Munch is often very sick as a child. His health continues to be frail all his life.

1881

After breaking off his study of architecture, Munch enrolls at the Kongelige Tegneskole (Royal Drawing School) in Kristiania. His goal is to become a painter. In the years that follow, he comes into contact with progressive Norwegian artists—for example, Christian Krohg, who supports him. Munch participates in his first exhibitions and belongs to the bohemian circle around the anarchist writer Hans Jæger.

1885

In the spring, Munch undertakes a three-week study trip to Paris. The avant-garde scene there profoundly impresses him. During a summer stay on the Oslofjord, he begins an affair with the married Milly Thaulow.

The relationship ends traumatically for the twenty-one-year-old artist. In the autumn exhibition in Kristiania the following year, he shows the first version of his painting "The Sick Child", in which he comes to terms with the death of his sister. The painting is controversially debated by the public and the press.

1889

Munch organizes his first solo exhibition in Kristiania with sixty-three paintings and forty-six drawings and participates in the Exposition Universelle in Paris with one painting. He spends the summer, as he will do so often in the coming years, in Åsgårdstrand. With a state scholarship, he travels to Paris in the fall, where he attends the art school of Léon Bonnat. In November, his father dies. At the end of the year, he moves to the suburb of Saint-Cloud, where he writes his artistic credo, known as the "Saint-Cloud Manifesto". Munch wants to create an art that shows existential feelings and mental states. With two more state scholarships, Munch secures additional stays in France, above all in Paris, by 1892.

1891

Munch's first show in Germany is held in Berlin on the occasion of the international exhibition for the fiftieth anniversary of the Verein Berliner Künstler (Association of Berlin Artists). Owing to friction between its chairman, Anton von Werner, and the Norwegian selection committee, however, Norway does not participate officially. Many artists, including Munch, exhibit instead in the "Münchener Jahresausstellung von Kunstwerken aller Nationen" (Munich Annual Exhibition of Artworks of All Nations).

1892

The Berlin-based Norwegian landscape painter Adelsteen Normann invites Munch in the name of the Verein Berliner Künstler to participate in a solo exhibition. His presentation with fifty-five paintings in the Architektenhaus (Architect's House) at Wilhelmstrasse 92/93 opens on November 5 and triggers a scandal that enters the annals of art history as the "Affaire Munch" (Munch Affair). The show, which is taken down again already on November 13 because of protests from conservative members of the association, can be seen immediately thereafter in Düsseldorf and Cologne at branches of the Galerie Eduard Schulte. Munch harnesses this publicity and moves to Berlin. From December 26, he shows the exhibition again on his own initiative in the elegant Equitable-Palast (Equitable-Palace) on Friedrichstrasse. Munch lives and works primarily in Berlin from 1892 to 1895, spending the summer months in Norway. In the city on the Spree, he is a regular at Café Bauer on the boulevard Unter den Linden and the wine bar "Zum schwarzen Ferkel" (The Black Piglet).

1893

Munch rents two rooms in a commercial building at Unter den Linden 19 and organizes an exhibition of his paintings that opens on December 3. For the first time, he arranges six paintings into a series, which he titles "Love". He will continue deliberately grouping works into series and cycles until the end of his life. It is the beginning of his work on what he will later call "The Frieze of Life". Munch's closest friends in Berlin include the Polish writer Stanisław

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Przybyszewski and the Norwegian music student Dagny Juel. She is the lionized center of the Ferkel circle. Juel marries Przybyszewski and later turns to writing.

1894

Przybyszewski edits the first book on Munch, with an essay of his own and one each by his writer friends Julius Meier-Graefe, Franz Servaes, and Willy Pastor. Munch discovers the medium of print-making. In addition to artistic curiosity, he is motivated by the hope of a larger customer base. He teaches himself the techniques of etching and lithography very quickly in 1894-95. Berlin printers offer him important assistance in this regard.

1895

In March, Munch exhibits with the Finnish artist Axel Gallén at the Galerie Ugo Barroccio on Unter den Linden. The series "Love" has now grown to fifteen works. As with his previous exhibitions, however, Munch finds hardly anyone interested in acquiring his works. His supporters include the intellectuals Baron Eberhard von Bodenhausen, Harry Graf Kessler, and Julius Meier-Graefe. The last named publishes a portfolio of eight etchings by Munch in June. Bodenhausen and Meier-Graefe are crucially involved in the founding of the avant-garde art journal "PAN", which is published in Berlin. Munch spends most of the second half of the year in Norway. In December, his brother Andreas dies of pneumonia.

1896

Munch moves to Paris, where he meets Meier-Graefe and Strindberg again. He works intensely on his printmaking abilities and now

introduces color as a means of expression. He produces his first woodcuts and lithographs. Munch tries to establish footing in Paris the following year as well—unsuccessfully.

1898

Munch travels constantly back and forth between Norway, France, and Germany. From 1899 onward, he spends time in Italy more often as well. Among other places, Munch lives for a time in Berlin again and again. In September 1898, he meets Tulla Larsen in Kristiania. It is the beginning of an "amour fou". His health continues to be highly unstable. In the following years, he repeatedly receives treatment in sanatoriums.

1902

After moving back to Berlin in late 1901 and occupying a studio at Lützowstrasse 82, in the spring of 1902 Munch scores an important success at the Berlin Secession. Under the title "Depiction of a Series of Images of Life", he presents, among other things, twenty-two paintings as a frieze in the association's sculpture hall. The Secession hopes to improve its international profile with this extensive appearance by the Norwegian artist. What will later be called "The Frieze of Life" is little appreciated by critics, but Munch is able to establish important contacts during this year, in part with the help of Albert Kollmann, who works hard to arrange commissions and sales for the artist. In the summer in Åsgårdstrand, he has a dramatic conflict with Tulla Larsen. The two separate.

1904

Munch continues to live primarily in Berlin in the autumn and

winter months while spending summers in Norway. He becomes a member of the Berlin Secession and signs a contract with the publisher Bruno Cassirer, who now distributes his prints exclusively. Bruno is the cousin of the art dealer Paul Cassirer, who from 1903 onward regularly shows Munch in his Kunstsalon (gallery) at Viktoriastrasse 35 in the wealthy district of Tiergarten. In 1905, Munch also signs an exclusive contract with the Galerie Commeter in Hamburg for the sale of his paintings.

1906

Munch spends time in Weimar and Bad Kösen, among other places. The Berlin theater intendant and director Max Reinhardt asks Munch to contribute to the set design for Henrik Ibsen's drama "Ghosts", for the opening of the Kammerspiele (Chamber Theater) of the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. Munch also produces "atmospheric sketches" for the production of "Hedda Gabler", also by Ibsen, which follows "Ghosts". Moreover, Reinhardt commissions the artist to design a decorative cycle for a reception hall of the Kammerspiele, which will later be called the "Reinhardt Frieze".

1907

In January, Munch begins working on a portrait of the industrialist and future foreign minister Walther Rathenau, who already owns two of his paintings and several prints. The artist ends his contracts with Bruno Cassirer and Galerie Commeter and again handles the distribution of his art himself. He spends the summer in Warnemünde on the Baltic Sea. In the autumn and winter of 1907-8,

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Munch is again living in Berlin. It will be his final extended stay in the city. “The Reinhardt Frieze” is installed at the end of the year. The hall in the Kammerspiele is, however, only rarely accessible to the public. Later, in 1912, the frieze is removed during a renovation.

1908

Munch again spends several summer months in Warnemünde. In August, he departs for Copenhagen. In the autumn, Munch suffers a nervous breakdown and is treated for several months in the clinic of Dr. Daniel Jacobson in Copenhagen. In his Norwegian homeland, the Statens Kunstmuseum (State Art Museum) in Kristiania, the future Nasjonalgalleriet (National Gallery), acquires numerous major works by the artist, and he is awarded the Kongelige Norske Sankt Olavs Orden (Royal Norwegian Order of Saint Olav).

1909

Munch is released from the clinic in the spring and moves permanently to Norway. He visits Berlin only sporadically from now on. He lives first in Kragerø and begins working on decorating the auditorium of the University of Kristiania, for which a competition is announced. The debates over the designs submitted continues until 1914. Munch will have large exhibitions in Norway and throughout Europe in the coming years.

1912

Munch is represented by thirty-two paintings in the Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne and is celebrated as a pioneer of the avant-garde alongside Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Paul Cézanne. Munch meets the art historian Curt Glaser, who is in charge

of the “Modern Department” of the Kupferstichkabinett (Museum of Prints and Drawings) in Berlin. Under his aegis, the department acquires an extensive collection of Munch’s prints and drawings.

1913

The Berlin Secession breaks up after long internal conflicts. A small group around Lovis Corinth continues to exist as the Secession, but the majority of the members, under the leadership of Max Liebermann and Paul Cassirer, leaves the association. The “Rump Secession” offers Munch an honorary membership, but he turns it down. The artists who leave organize an autumn exhibition, where Munch shows his designs for the decoration of the auditorium of the University of Kristiania, about which disagreement still reigns in Norway. In Berlin, the paintings are received with enthusiasm. The university accepts Munch’s paintings for the auditorium the following year.

1916

During World War I, Munch has next to no contact with Germany. He purchases the Ekely estate near Oslo, where he will live until his death. The murals for the auditorium of the University of Kristiania are handed over to the public.

1918

On the occasion of a retrospective at the Blomqvist Kunsthandel in Kristiania, Munch calls his constantly changing group of paintings on love, anxiety, and death The Frieze of Life.

1923

Munch is named a member of the Preussische Akademie der Künste

(Prussian Academy of the Arts) in Berlin. In the 1920s, many German museums make an effort to acquire works by Munch. The artist is, however, scarcely willing to sell paintings in his possession any longer.

1927

After Munch was honored by an extensive exhibition at the Kunsthalle Mannheim the previous year, the Nationalgalerie in Berlin opens the largest retrospective on Edvard Munch thus far in March 1927 with 244 works. At the same time, around 150 graphic works are shown at the Kupferstichkabinett. The show is a triumph. Critics celebrate him as a classic and appropriate him as a German artist. Munch donates the painting “Snow Shovelers” to the Nationalgalerie. The Berlin exhibition travels to Nasjonalgalleriet in Oslo, where works are added.

1930

The Nationalgalerie in Berlin purchases three works by Munch in 1930–31. Supplemented by loans and donations, there are six of his paintings in the museum’s collection in 1932. An eye ailment afflicts Munch in 1930 and 1931.

1933

Munch receives the Grand Cross of the Sankt Olavs Orden. After the National Socialists take power in Germany, Munch’s reception as “Germanic” takes on an ideological quality. At the same time, his art stands for the modernism they defamed as “degenerate”.

1937

Eighty-three works by Munch are confiscated from German collections in the “Entartete Kunst” (Degenerate Art) action.

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Several of these works are auctioned in Norway in 1938–39.

1940

A good seven months after World War II begins, German troops occupy Norway on April 9. The seventy-six-year-old Munch writes a will bequeathing all of his works and his literary remains to the City of Oslo. Today, they represent the core of the collection of Munchmuseet in Oslo.

1944

Edvard Munch dies at Ekely on January 23.

Source: Exhibition catalogue "Edvard Munch. Magic of the North"

Exhibition texts

The radical modernity of Edvard Munch (1863–1944) was a challenge in his time. That is especially true of art in Berlin around 1900, on which the Norwegian painter had a powerful influence. Enthusiasm for everything Nordic had taken hold of the capital of the German Reich. This fascination was an occasion to invite the unknown Munch in 1892 to a solo exhibition at the Association of Berlin Artists. The public reacted with shock. Munch's works contradicted the romantic image of the North. His interest in the human psyche and strong emotions also had a disturbing effect, as did his sketch-like painting style, which was perceived as unfinished. Established artists felt provoked, but more progressive ones recognized the young Norwegian's potential. There was an uproar, which was widely discussed in the press. The "Munch Affair" launched modernism in Berlin and the painter's international career. His art changed not least the idea of the North. It was now no longer associated with idyllic fjord landscapes but rather with Munch's symbolist works in powerful colors. Until early in the year 1908, Munch spent several extended periods in Berlin. Even after he settled in Norway in 1909, traveling little thereafter, he continued to influence artistic activities in the city. With around sixty exhibitions between 1892 and 1933, Berlin became one of the most important places in Europe for him.

The Dream of the North and the "Munch Affair"

"The best of Germany, the whole of creative literature, fell for the magic of the North around the turn of the century," the writer Stefan Zweig recalled in 1925. Scandinavian landscape painting also radiated such magic. Views of fjords were very popular. Even Emperor William II enthused about a romantic, utopian north and set off annually on a "journey to the North." The Berlin-based Norwegian painter Adelsteen Normann invited Edvard Munch in 1892 to show his work at the Association of Berlin Artists. The art scene on the Spree River was not very progressive at the time. Several months before Munch arrived in the city, however, the first modern artists' group had been founded, the Association of the XI. In its exhibitions, the group turned against the

dominant conservative taste in art. The fifty-five works that Munch presented in Berlin in 1892 were avant-garde and strange even for open-minded art enthusiasts. Many members of the association were outraged. They demanded a vote to shut down the exhibition. The result was close, but just a week later the show had to be taken down. Munch, who was not yet thirty, enjoyed the unexpected attention and moved to Berlin, where he lived and worked for several extended periods until 1908.

Love, Anxiety, and Death: "The Frieze of Life"

Edvard Munch was ahead of his time. He was interested in psychology and elemental emotions, which he saw as connecting people. His reduced paintings of intense color about love, anxiety, and death met with resistance and a lack of understanding. Munch therefore began to experiment in Berlin, presenting his works in series. He wanted to show how the themes were connected and hoped that they would explain one another. Early on, Munch had distanced himself from traditional visual formulas and subject matter. He demanded: "There should be living people who breathe and feel, suffer and love." In 1893–94, for an exhibition in Berlin that he had organized himself, Munch grouped for the first time six works as a "Study for a Series 'Love'". For another show at the Galerie Ugo Barroccio in Berlin in 1895, the series had already grown considerably. In 1902, for the annual exhibition of the Berlin Secession, Munch expanded this idea again. With twenty-two works, it was his most extensive presentation yet and now introduced the theme of death as well. Yet Munch's ambitious project did not achieve the breakthrough for which he had been hoping. "The Frieze of Life," as the artist would later call the project, became his magnum opus, which he put together in new ways again and again.

Experimental and Virtuosoic

In Berlin in 1894, Edvard Munch discovered print-making. The artist very quickly taught himself the techniques of etching and lithography. Professional printing houses assisted him. Later, in Paris, he adopted the woodcut as well. He quickly mastered all three processes with pleasure in experimentation and the greatest virtuosity. The judge and graphic arts specialist Gustav Schiefler of Hamburg, who was a close friend of Munch's, described in 1902 his first encounter with Munch's prints: "It is the strongest and I can surely say most thrilling impression I have ever gotten from works of contemporary art." Munch

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continued to focus more on printmaking and found interested buyers, especially in Berlin, well into the 1930s. The art historian, author, and collector Curt Glaser (1879–1943) was one of Munch’s most important supporters. From 1909 to 1924, Glaser worked in the modern department at the Museum of Prints and Drawings in Berlin and began to build a considerable collection of Munch’s graphic art. Glaser wrote in 1922: “All graphic techniques—not just the woodcut—gain through him previously unsuspected expressive possibilities. New content creates a new vessel for itself.”

Photographing in Berlin

In the late nineteenth century, amateur photography was growing by leaps and bounds. Easy-to-use box cameras conquered the market. In Berlin in 1902, Edvard Munch acquired the most popular model at the time: a Kodak No.2 Bull’s-Eye. The camera was easy to handle and simple to use. Prints were made directly from the 3½-by-3½-inch negative without enlarging it. It was possible to take six to twelve photographs on one celluloid film roll. The film could be handed in at Kodak stores, or one could make prints oneself with the necessary equipment. Munch used this camera until 1910. Only after acquiring a new camera in Norway in 1926 did he take up photography again. Munch made many photographs in Berlin in the early years: most of them show his immediate environment. He portrayed himself, took photographs of his studio, friends, and acquaintances, and documented his exhibitions. Unlike many artists of his time who were also exploring photography, Munch rarely used the technology as preparation for his art. Nevertheless, there is an extraordinarily high number of self-portraits among his photographs.

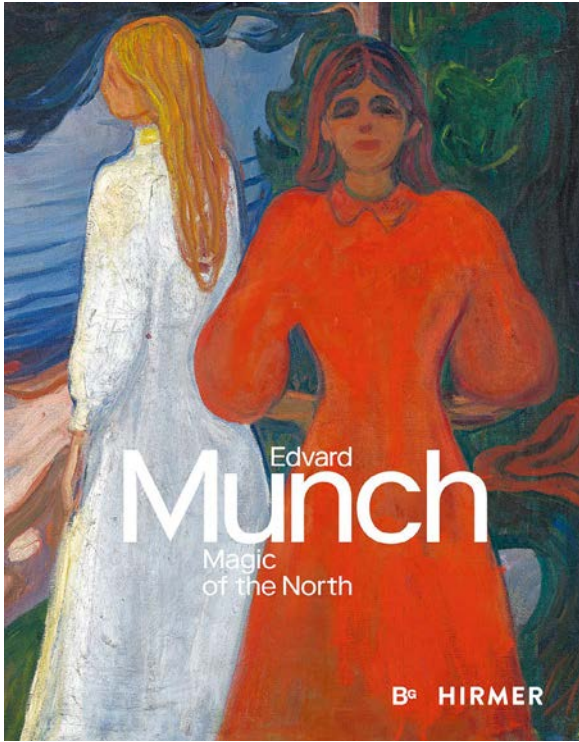
“I am absolutely not a portrait painter”

Portraits played an important role in Edvard Munch’s creative work and in his painting gaining acceptance in Berlin. Although convinced that he had painted psychologically interesting portraits, Munch said of himself: “I am absolutely not a portrait painter.” He saw his strengths in other areas, such as in his motifs on love and death or in his emotionally charged landscapes. His contemporaries already noticed that the one was inconceivable without the other. One critic wrote: “A painter like Munch whose every fiber is rooted in the psychological, and who cannot even render a landscape except by making its soul his own, must necessarily be a subtle portraitist.” To characterize people, the artist relied less on social

features than on color timbres and pulsating volumes of color. In his early years in Berlin, Munch depicted its international bohemia, which at the beginning of the 1890s met at the wine bar called The Black Piglet. The sitters included the Polish writer Stanisław Przybyszewski; his future wife, the Norwegian writer Dagny Juel; and the Swedish author August Strindberg. Art enthusiasts in Berlin, such as Walther Rathenau, who later became Germany’s minister of foreign affairs, also had Munch portray them.

Triumph and Tragedy

In 1927, the National Gallery in Berlin organized Edvard Munch’s largest retrospective yet, with 244 works, in the Crown Prince’s Palace, which was also the most extensive solo presentation that the National Gallery’s modern department had shown. Visitors streamed into the “gallery of the living,” which had been cleared for Munch’s show. Critics celebrated Munch and appropriated him for the history of German art. His name was said to stand for “the specifically Nordic sense of the world that emerged in revolt already in the 1890s.” Munch was also regarded as a precursor of Expressionism. Around thirty-five years after his scandalous exhibition at the Association of Berlin Artists, no one disputed any longer the Norwegian artist’s importance for the evolution of modern art. After the National Socialists took power in 1933, Munch’s position was, on the one hand, instrumentalized in Germany as “Nordic-Germanic” but also, on the other hand, defamed as “degenerate” from early on. In 1937, ten years after his triumph at the National Gallery, eighty-three of his works were confiscated from public collections as part of the “Degenerate Art” action. In a few cases, the museums were able to have the paintings returned, due to this ambivalent assessment of Munch.



Exhibition catalogue

**Edvard Munch
Magic of the North**

Edvard Munch's radical modernity in painting was a challenge for his contemporaries. This applied in particular to the art scene in Berlin around 1900 which the Norwegian Symbolist artist influenced profoundly. In return, he received support there and was able to continue to develop his work. In 1892 the Association of Berlin Artists invited the still-unknown Edvard Munch to an exhibition. The public was shocked by the colourful, sketch-like pictures. The artist enjoyed the furore and moved to the city on the Spree, where he repeatedly sojourned until 1908. Here he learned the techniques for printed graphics and presented for the first time paintings in several continuous series which would become central to his oeuvre. In Berlin, before long, the concept of the "Magic of the North" (Stefan Zweig) was no longer associated with romantic or naturalistic fjord landscapes, but with Munch's psychologically concentrated pictorial worlds.

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Edvard Munch, Seated Model on the Couch, 1924–26, Photo: © MUNICH, Oslo / Ove Kvavik



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berlinischegalerie.de/en/education

Programme in English



Edvard Munch, Self-Portrait in Broad Brimmed Hat, 1905–1906, Photo: © MUNICH, Oslo / Ove Kvavik

Audio guide **Audio descriptions and commentaries on 19 selected exhibits**

bg.berlin/audioguide-munch

The audio guide to accompany the exhibition “Edvard Munch: Magic of the North” tells the history of Edvard Munch and Berlin in 19 commentaries about selected works. It also reflects upon the enthusiasm of the period for all things Nordic.

The hour-long tour begins in the late 19th century, when the general public and the Berlin art scene in particular were fascinated by untainted fjord scenery, midnight sun and untamed nature. Into this imaginary idyll burst the bright colours of an as yet unknown Norwegian painter: Edvard Munch. He was to transform how people thought about the “Magic of the North”. By 1910 at the latest, they were no longer associating Scandinavia with romantic or naturalist landscapes, but with Munch’s highly charged emotional imagery.

The audio guide accompanies visitors as they explore Munch’s art, which polarised viewers around 1900. We hear how Munch reacted to Berlin and Berlin to Munch – from the first scandalous show in 1892 via his work for Max Reinhardt and Walther Rathenau to the fate that met his art under the Nazis. The artist himself and his companions are also given a say in quotations.

For visitors of little or no sight, and for the fully-sighted too, these commentaries are backed by detailed audio descriptions of the selected works. The audio guide can be heard free of charge either by loaning a device at the museum or by downloading the Web version onto the user’s own phone or tablet.

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Edvard Munch

Magic of the North

15.9.23 – 22.1.24



Edvard Munch, Red and White, 1899–1900
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Halvor Bjørngård



Edvard Munch, Dagny Juel Przybyszewska, 1893
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Juri Kobayashi



Edvard Munch, Stanislaw Przybyszewski, 1895
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Juri Kobayashi



Edvard Munch, Eye in Eye, 1899–1900
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Ove Kvavik



Edvard Munch, Road in Åsgårdstrand, 1901
Photo: © Kunstmuseum Basel / Jonas Hänggi



Edvard Munch, The Hearse on Potsdamer Platz, 1902
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Sidsel de Jong



Edvard Munch, Nude with long Red Hair, 1902
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Rena Li



Edvard Munch, Dance on the Beach (The Linde Frieze), 1904
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Halvor Bjørngård



Edvard Munch, Young People on the Beach (The Linde Frieze), 1904
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Juri Kobayashi



Edvard Munch, Trees by the Beach (The Linde Frieze), 1904
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Ove Kvavik



Edvard Munch, Moonlight on the Sea (The Reinhardt Frieze), 1906-1907
Photo: © bpk / Nationalgalerie, SMB / Jörg P. Anders

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Edvard Munch, Self-Portrait in Broad Brimmed Hat, 1905-1906
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Ove Kvavik



Edvard Munch, Vampire, 1916-1918
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Rena Li



Edvard Munch, Two Teenagers, 1919
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Ove Kvavik



Edvard Munch, Starry Night, 1922-1924
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Juri Kobayashi



Edvard Munch, Seated Model on the Couch, 1924-26
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Ove Kvavik



Edvard Munch, Woman, 1925
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Ove Kvavik

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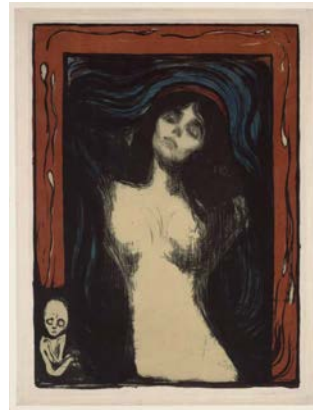
Edvard Munch, Two Human Beings (The Lonely Ones), ca 1935
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Ove Kvavik



Edvard Munch, The Man in the Cabbage Field, 1943,
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo / Halvor Bjørngård



Edvard Munch, Self-Portrait, 1895
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Edvard Munch, Madonna (Woman Making Love), 1895/1902
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Edvard Munch, The Sick Child I, 1896
Photo: © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett / Jörg P. Anders



Edvard Munch, Angst, 1896
Photo: © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett / Jörg P. Anders

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Edvard Munch, Self-Portrait on a Valise in the Studio, 1902
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo



Edvard Munch's Exhibition at Paul Cassirer, 1907
Photo: © MUNCH, Oslo



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