

# OPEN STUDIO ANYWHERE



## The Art of Expressionism



Use this kit to learn about Expressionism, the artwork and characteristics of this movement, and its influential artists. Inside you'll find prompts, projects, and more to help you create your own art!

To learn more about Artists Creating Together, visit our website at [artistscreatingtogether.org](http://artistscreatingtogether.org)



**HermanMiller Cares**

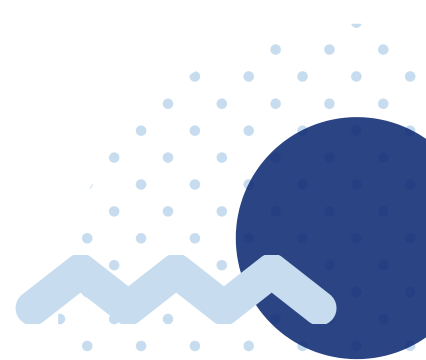
# What is Expressionism?

Expressionism was an art movement that began in Germany around 1910. As an artistic style it emphasized feelings above everything else, making images of reality distorted in order to make the expression of the artist's inner feelings or ideas more clear.

Expressionism is unique for how it sought to express emotional experience and not just physical experience. In the simplest terms, these artists wanted to painted how something made them feel, and they wanted the viewer to feel that same emotion.



Click here to watch a video that will help you learn more about Expressionism!



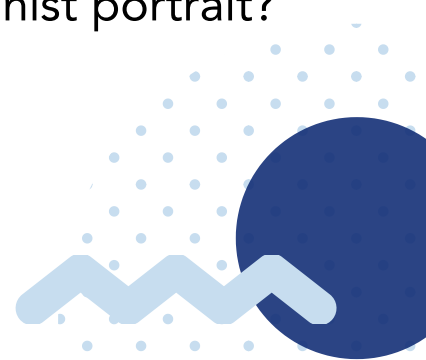
# What does it look like?

In expressionist work, color is highly intense and non-naturalistic. Instead of looking "natural" or reflecting reality, skin may look green and blue. The sky may burn bright red and purple in ways we would never see in real life. This is all to better express emotions! In terms of style, expressionism featured flattened forms and extreme angles. They turned to these simplified, and even distorted forms, and unusually strong, unnatural colors to jolt the viewer and provoke an emotional response.

Let's look at an example of an expressionist portrait as compared to a portrait from the renaissance - this will help us really see what we mean by flattened forms and angles! Both of these painting are entitled "Portrait of a Man", but that might be where the similarities end...



Can you tell which one of these is the expressionist portrait?  
How can you tell?



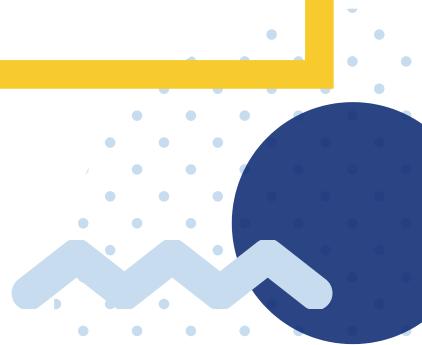




# Masks & Emotions

Masks can be a symbol of emotion and acting. Because expressionism is all about displaying emotional experiences, masks can be a good symbol of expressionist art.

Use the space below to draw masks of different expressions. One could be happy, another mad, or sad. Think about the colors that you feel represent that emotion as you draw!

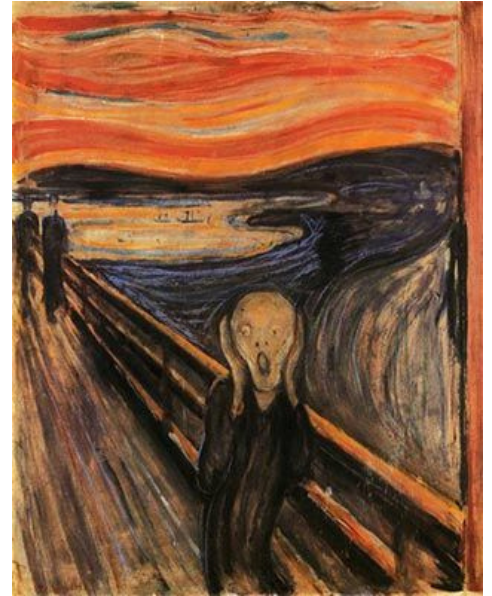


# Artists of Expressionism

Let's look at two significant figures in the Expressionist art movement:  
Edvard Munch and Franz Marc!

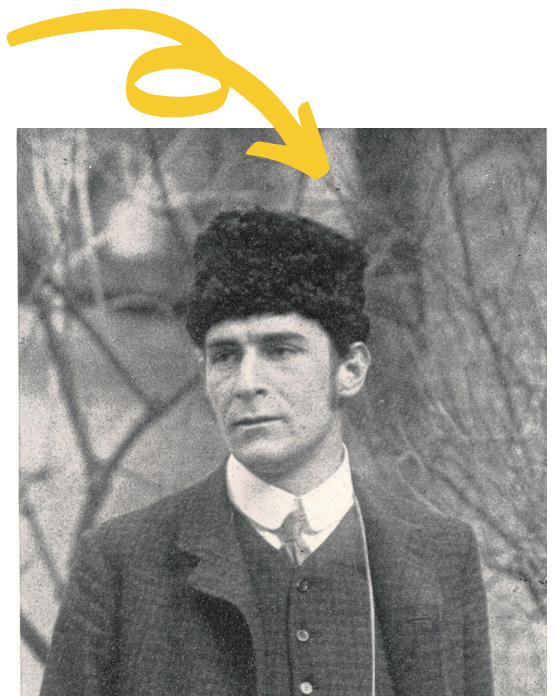


Edvard Munch was a Norwegian painter most famous for his piece, *The Scream*! He is often considered the father of expressionism, with his work inspiring young artists at the turn of the century.



To learn more about Munch, click on his picture.

Franz Marc was a German-born artist. He began his art career with interest in more naturalist and realist styles, but became enamoured with the symbolic and abstract style of expressionism.



To see more of Marc's art, click on his picture.





# Expressionist Groups

Something interesting to note about Expressionism is the presence of groups of artists, working and creating together. Let's look at two of the most famous expressionist groups. While we learn more, think about what you would name your artist group!

## Die Brücke: The Bridge

Die Brücke was a group of German expressionist artists formed in Dresden in 1905. Die Brücke means "The Bridge". They named themselves this because they saw their artwork as the bridge into the future of art. They wanted to defy the traditions of what was popular at the time, which was Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.

Their artwork was a simplified style that stressed bold outlines and blocks of strong color. This may sound similar to the French Fauvists we studied last month, but two main things set Die Brücke apart from the Fauves. They emphasize and explore anxiety and angst far more than the lyrical Fauvists. They were also influenced by the simplified forms of woodcut prints, setting them apart from the Fauves.



Erich Heckel, White Horses (Weisse Pferde), 1912

## Der Blaue Reiter: The Blue Rider

Der Blaue Reiter was another expressionist group of artists in Germany. The group began in Munich in 1909 as an abstract counterpart to Die Brücke's distorted figurative style.

Both groups used their art to confront and address feelings of alienation within an increasingly modernizing world, Der Blaue

Reiter sought to transcend that world by pursuing the spiritual value of art. They believed that each color and each shape had spiritual values. Therefore it made sense to tend toward abstraction, as they separated color from form to achieve something that seemed otherworldly.



Wassily Kandinsky, Cossacks 1910-11





# Painting like an Expressionist

Because expressionism is all about expressing emotions, today we will do just that!

In this month's project, you will be taking a scene out your window or inside your house, and painting it with an emphasis on feeling.

All the materials that you need will be:

- thick paper or card stock
- a pencil
- paint or markers



Now take a look outside your window or around your room. Think about the scene and how it makes you feel.

Does it make you feel happy or calm?

Or does it make you bored or maybe even sad?

What colors do you associate with that emotion? Often we see expressionist painting people with shades of green and blue to show angst or anxiety.

Then think about the two groups we studied, are you going to draw things more figuratively like Die Brücke would, or more abstract like Der Blaue Reiter would?





# Part 1: Sketching a Design

Once you have an idea of what you want to paint, take your pencil and start to sketch out rough shapes. As you sketch, remember how the expressionist artists used their emotions to guide their style of art!

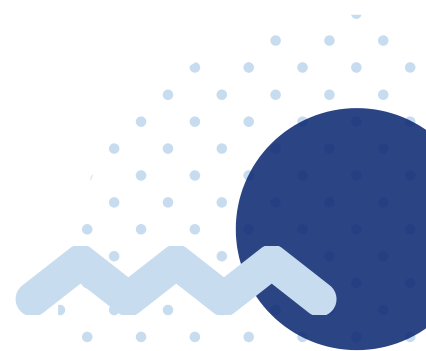
For example, if your scene makes you happy, think about what makes you happy about it and emphasize those elements.



This scene feels sad, with a figure hunched over the bed, as another rests. To convey this, the artist used long, streaking lines to create a melancholy feel.

The color palette is primarily green, with yellows and blues.

As you draw, stop and think what emotion someone would have when looking at your artwork - you can even ask someone around you how looking at the artwork makes them feel.





## Part 2: Painting!

Now that you have your painting all sketched out, you can make it into an actual painting by adding some color!

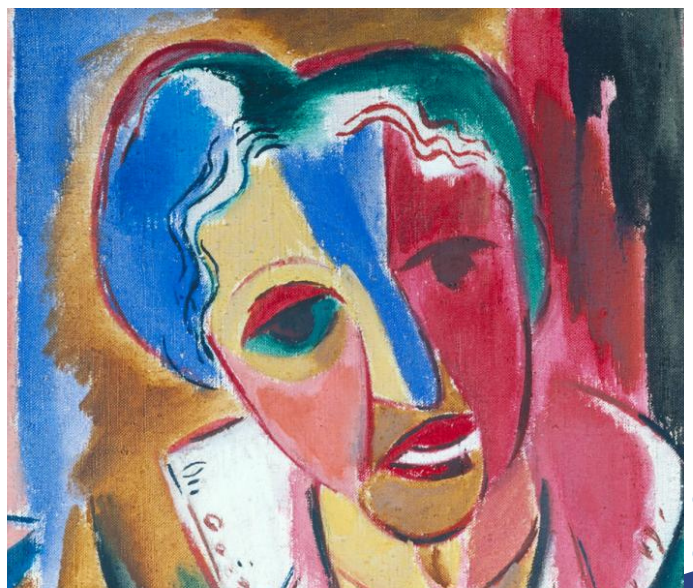
Use either paints or markers to color in your drawing. Like we learned earlier, Expressionists use wild and vibrant colors to show emotion, and that color isn't always realistic. Someone in your scene may not actually have green skin - but to convey sickness or anxiety, you might tint their skin green. We all have associations between colors and feelings, even if we don't think about it often! Yellow often makes us think of happiness and joy, red makes us think of anger or deep emotions, blue makes us think of sadness (like when someone says they are feeling blue), and there are so many more!

Instead of painting the colors you see in front of you, use these associations to decide what colors to use.



Here is a painting by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, entitled Dr Rosa Schapire from 1919.

Let's zoom in on her face to see this color choice up close!





# Learn more about

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLhDLL3MjSs>

<https://magazine.artland.com/art-movement-expressionism/>

<https://www.britannica.com/art/Expressionism>

<https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/edvard-munch/m02nsp?hl=en>

<https://www.theartstory.org/artist/marc-franz/>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/e/expressionism>

[https://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning/themes/expressionism/](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/expressionism/)

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Die-Brucke>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/d/der-blaue-reiter>

