

Kids @ CAM – At Home Family Projects

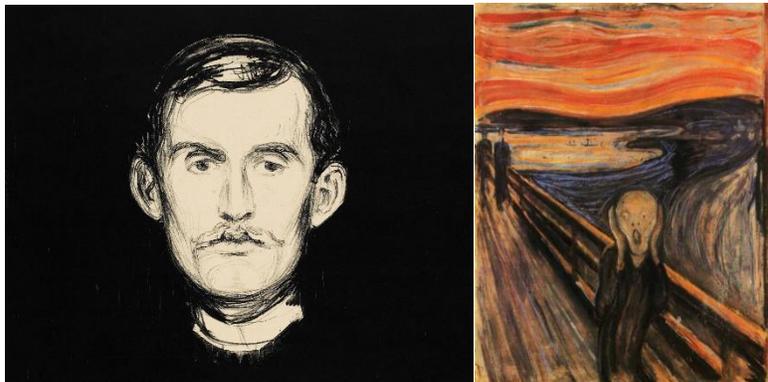
Spotlight on Art History

Edvard Munch

About the Artist:

“In common with Michelangelo and Rembrandt I am more interested in line, its rise and fall, than in color.”

Edvard Munch (1863 – 1944) was a Norwegian painter and printmaker. His best known work, *The Scream*, has become one of the most iconic images of world art. His childhood was overshadowed by illness, sadness and the dread of inheriting a mental condition that ran in the family. Munch’s own deeply original style crystallized about 1892. The flowing use of line in his paintings was similar to that of contemporary Art Nouveau, but Munch used line not as decoration but as a vehicle to express his inner feelings and turmoil. For this reason, he is commonly known as an Expressionist artist. The violent emotion and unconventional imagery of his paintings and prints created controversy. Critics were also offended by his innovative techniques, which to most appeared unfinished. The scandal, however, helped make his name known throughout Germany, and from there his reputation spread farther. He continued to move around extensively until he settled in Norway in 1910. At the heart of Munch’s achievement is his series of paintings on love and death. Munch’s massive output of graphic art—consisting of etchings, drypoints, lithographs, and woodcuts—began in 1894. The principal attraction to him of printmaking was that it enabled him to communicate his message to a much larger number of people, but it also afforded him exciting opportunities for experimentation. His lack of formal training in any graphic medium was no doubt a factor in pushing him toward extremely innovative techniques. Like many of his contemporaries, he was influenced by the Japanese tradition in his use of the woodcut, but he radically simplified the process by, for example, printing from a single block of wood sawed into a number of small pieces. Munch’s use of the actual grain of the wood for expressive purposes proved an especially successful experiment, and it greatly influenced later artists. He also frequently combined different media or overlaid one medium on top of another. Munch’s prints closely resemble his paintings in both style and subject matter. Munch suffered a nervous breakdown in 1908–09, and afterward his art became more positive and extroverted. Upon his death, Munch bequeathed his estate and all the paintings, prints, and drawings in his possession to the city of Oslo, which erected the Munch Museum in 1963. Many of his finest works are in the National Gallery in Oslo.



ART AT HOME – LINEAR PRINTS

What You Will Need:

- Styrofoam Plate
- Sharpened Pencil
- Paint
- Paint brush or roller
- Table Cover
- Several sheets of thick paper or cardstock (larger than your Styrofoam plate)

Edvard Munch worked in woodcuts often. This project gives you an idea of how that type of work feels without using actual wood and woodcarving tools. Before you begin, look at images of Edvard Munch’s work and choose one that you want to recreate (or make up your own design!)

- Step 1 – Using your pencil, lightly sketch your design into the plate.
- Step 2 – In the negative space of your drawing, make a series of concentric lines that follow the outlines of drawing. This will give it the linear feel of Munch’s woodcuts.
- Step 3 – Begin to “carve” your design by tilting you pencil into the line and applying a moderate amount of pressure. You want to break through the surface of the Styrofoam, but not go all the way through. Take your time so that you follow your sketch. You can always go over the lines if you need to.
- Step 4 – Place your paper nearby so that you are ready to print.
- Step 5 – Roll or paint over your entire Styrofoam surface. Make sure the paint is not so thick that it falls into the carved lines.
- Step 6 – Carefully place your painted plate onto your paper, being careful not to wiggle it. Gently rub your hand over the back of the plate to make sure the paint is evenly distributed.
- Step 7 – Carefully pull the plate and the paper apart.
- Step 8 – Wipe your plate clean and repeat the process, using different colors if you choose, as many times as you want.
- Step 9 – Place your prints somewhere safe to dry while you clean your work area.

Tips:

- If you don’t have a Styrofoam plate, you may find Styrofoam as food packaging you can wash and use.
- Remember that your sketch will print a mirror image, so avoid using words or numbers (or you can draw them in reverse so that they print properly.)
- A good way to tell if your lines are deep enough to print is to close your eyes and run your fingers over the plate. If you can easily feel where all the lines are, they are ready to print.

Questions for Discussion:

- What part of the process was most enjoyable? What part was the most challenging?
- What advice would you give to someone else before they start this project?
- Munch liked to express emotion in his artwork. How would you describe the mood of your picture? How does it change if you used different colors?

Follow Up Project Suggestion:

- Munch was known for cutting a wood cut into different pieces, like a puzzle, and applying different colors to each piece. Then he would put the block back together and make a multi-colored print. Try this using a Styrofoam plate!

