



Munch

Page 4:
Edvard Munch.
Photograph, c. 1902.

Page 6:
Landscape. Maridalen by Oslo, 1881.
Oil on wood, 22 x 27.5 cm.
Munch Museum, Oslo.

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"To me, life is like a window in a cell – I shall never reach the promised land."

— Edvard Munch

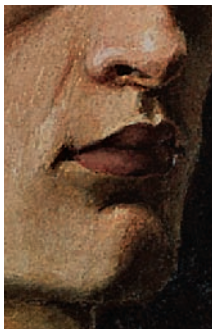
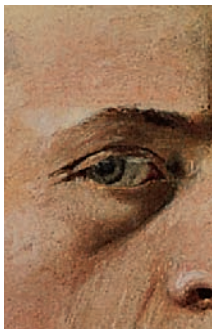


Biography

- 1863 12 December: born in Løten, Norway, the second child of Laura (born Bjelstad) and Christian Munch, a doctor. There are to be three more children: Andreas, Laura, and Inger.
- 1864 The family moves to Christiania (Oslo).
- 1868 Mother dies of tuberculosis at the age of thirty.
- 1877 Elder sister Sophie dies of tuberculosis at the age of sixteen.
- 1879 Attends the Technical College in Christiania to study engineering. Produces his first sketches in May.
- 1880 Takes up painting in earnest; studies in Christiania under Hans Olaf Heyerdahl and Christian Krohg.
- 1881 Studies at the Royal School of Art and Design under Julius Middelthun.
- 1884 *Morning (A Servant Girl)*, bought by Frits Thaulow, is Munch's first real sale. Thaulow gives him money to enable him to visit Antwerp and study in Paris; though he postpones the visit for a year because of illness. Starts an affair with Emilie Thaulow, the wife of a distant cousin.
- 1885 First visit to Paris. Returns as 'the first and only Impressionist of Norway' (Krohg).
- 1886 Member of avant-garde group 'Christiania's Bohemia'.
- 1889 First solo exhibition. Gains a state scholarship and returns to Paris in October. Studies with Léon Bonnat. Drawn to Van Gogh, Gauguin, the Neo-Impressionists, and the Symbolists. Begins the compilation of *The Frieze of Life*. Summer at Åsgårdstrand by the sea. Sees his father for the last time, who dies in November.
- 1890 Returns to Norway via Antwerp. Ten paintings at Autumn Exhibition, including *Spring Day on Karl Johan Street*. Goes back to France with a renewed scholarship; falls ill.
- 1891 Stays in Nice to recover from illness. Returns to Christiania in May.
- 1892 Returns to Nice for the winter. Exhibits in Christiania and is praised by Krohg. Invited to exhibit at the Association of Berlin Artists; his section closed by the organisers as it is deemed 'scandalous'. Lives on and off in Germany for sixteen years.
- 1893 Returns to Norway reinvigorated. Works on *The Scream*. Exhibits with the Berlin Secession.
- 1894 Starts to make engravings and etchings. New style in monochrome is sharper and more precise than his painting style.
- 1895 Returns to Norway.

E. Munch

- 1896 Back in Paris; makes the acquaintance of the Nabis; exhibits his *Frieze of Life* paintings at the Salon des Indépendants. Designs sets for Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. The *Revue Blanche* publishes lithograph of *The Scream*. Death of brother Andreas.
- 1898 Meets Tulla Larsen.
- 1899 Enters a sanatorium in Norway. The National Gallery in Christiania buys two of his pictures.
- 1902 Exhibits twenty-eight paintings, including the *Frieze of Life* series, at the Berlin Secession gallery, along with Hodler and Kandinsky. Disastrous end to his relationship with Tulla Larsen.
- 1903 Meets Eva Mudocci; stays in Lübeck with the Linde family.
- 1904 Visits several German cities including Weimar.
- 1905 Retrospective exhibition in Prague. Dissolution of union of Norway and Sweden: political crisis.
- 1908 Exhibition in Copenhagen. He suffers a nervous breakdown and checks himself into a clinic. Becomes Knight of the Royal Norwegian Order of St Olav.
- 1909 Recovery and return to Norway. Exhibition at Blomqvist Gallery, Christiania.
- 1911-1916 Murals for Great Hall, Oslo University.
- 1912 Sonderbund exhibition, Cologne: over 570 works by 160 artists.
- 1913 Expressionist exhibition, Berlin; graphic works at Armory Show, New York.
- 1916 Buys estate at Ekely, in Skøyen, where he lives until his death. Paints rural motifs.
- 1919 Exhibition of graphic works in New York.
- 1921-1922 Murals for canteen of Freia Chocolate Factory, Christiania.
- 1922 Solo exhibition in Zürich, 'the best I ever had'.
- 1923 Becomes a member of the German Academy of Arts.
- 1925 Honorary member of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts. Christiania becomes Oslo.
- 1926 International Exhibition, Dresden. Kunsthalle, Mannheim. Death of sister Laura.
- 1928 International Exhibition, San Francisco. Exhibits at the Royal Society, London for the first time.
- 1931-1932 Exhibitions in Edinburgh and Glasgow
- 1933 Monographs about Munch by Jens Thiis and Paul Gauguin published. Receives French Légion d'Honneur; Grand Cross of Royal Norwegian Order of St Olav.
- 1935 Exhibition of paintings in New York.
- 1937 Visits Gothenburg, his last trip abroad.
- 1940 Norway occupied by the Nazis.
- 1944 23 January: dies at Ekely. Leaves all his works to the city of Oslo.
- 1946 Exhibition of the Estate of Munch, Oslo.

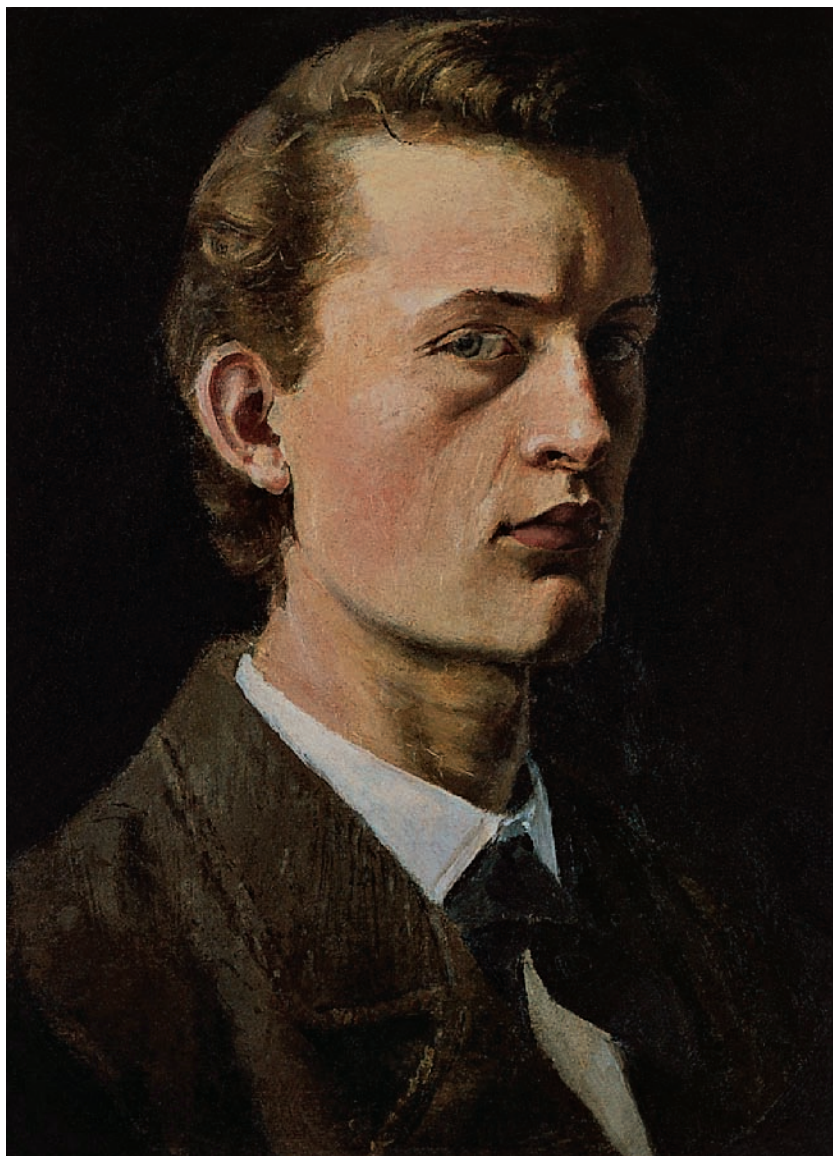


The name Edvard Munch conjures up, for most people, one irresistibly memorable picture: *The Scream*, a shriek of stomach-churning terror uttered by a cringing figure with a skull-like face outlined against a fiery, blood-red sunset. This iconic image has come to epitomise the angst embodied in the Expressionism of the late 19th century. Yet its creator,

Self-Portrait

1881-1882

Oil on paper glued to cardboard, 25.5 x 18.5 cm
Munch Museum, Oslo





a gentle soul given to introspection and self-analysis, lived to see his eightieth birthday and witnessed the world-wide critical acceptance of the Expressionist movement which he was largely instrumental in initiating. Somehow one imagines that the originator of so graphic an image of fear would be too delicate and unworldly to survive the violent upheavals of the early 20th century, but, although he suffered terribly from

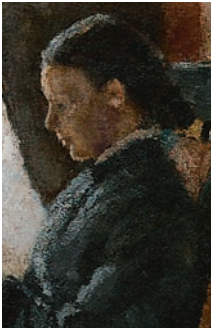
Old Aker Church (Gamle Aker kirke)

1881

Oil on canvas, 16 x 21 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





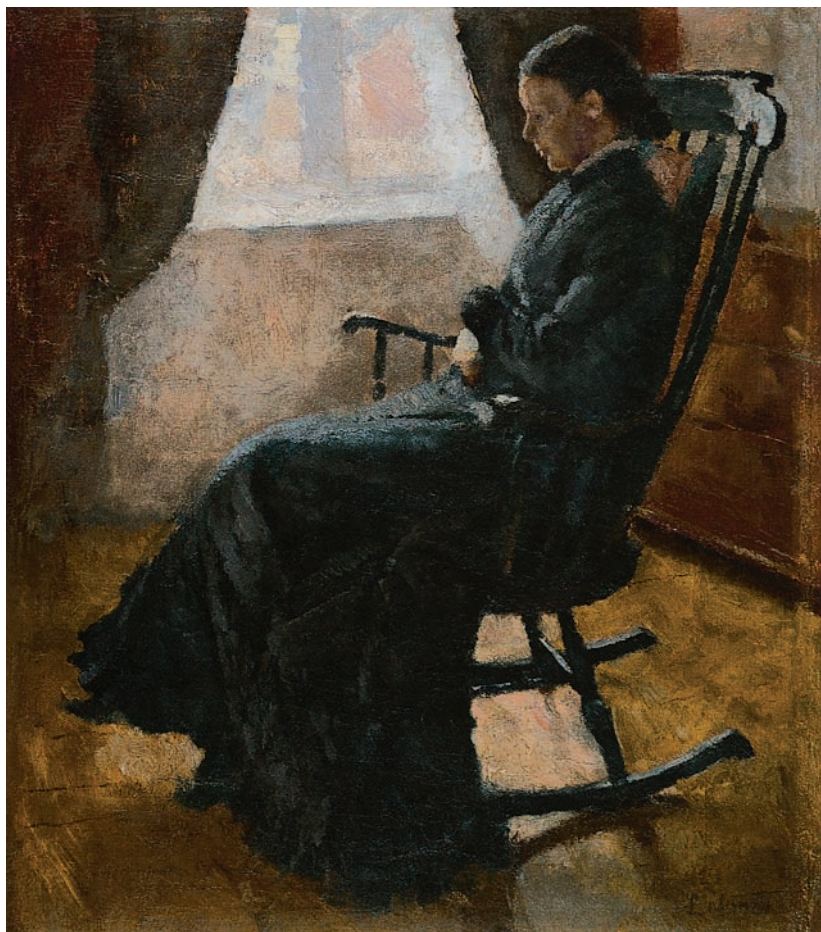
depression and anxiety for the greater part of his life, Munch was able to find a mode of living that enabled him to produce a large body of psychologically penetrating, disturbingly beautiful work. He was born in 1863 to a frail young mother, Laura Bjørstad, and her older husband, Christian Munch, a doctor; the following year the family moved to Christiania, as Oslo

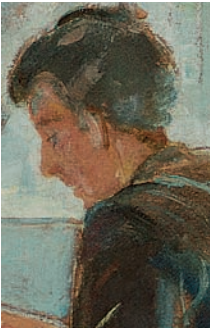
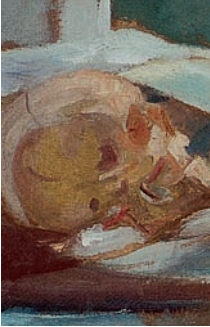
Karen Bjørstad in the Rocking Chair

1883

Oil on canvas, 47 x 41 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





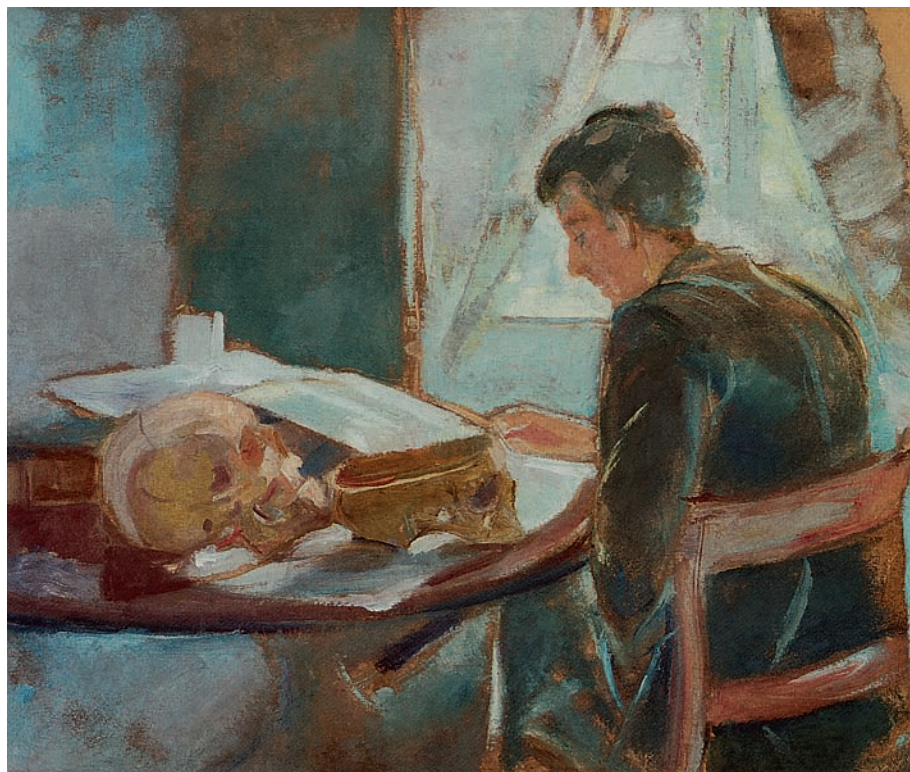
was then called. There were five children altogether, of which Edvard was the second-born and eldest son. Early on, Munch understood that he had a difficult two-fold heritage to contend with: the physical threat of tuberculosis, which first carried off his mother and then his elder sister, and the faint but distinct possibility of mental instability. Laura Munch died at the age of

My Brother Studying Anatomy

1883

Oil on cardboard, 62 x 75 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





thirty, shortly after the birth of her fifth child. The effect on the family may be imagined. The father suffered most acutely, the younger children carrying only the haziest memories of their mother into later life. But the consciousness of loss never left them.

His father's religiosity became more pronounced after Laura's death, to the point where the children's



Girl Lighting a Stove

1883

Oil on canvas, 96.5 x 66 cm

Private collection





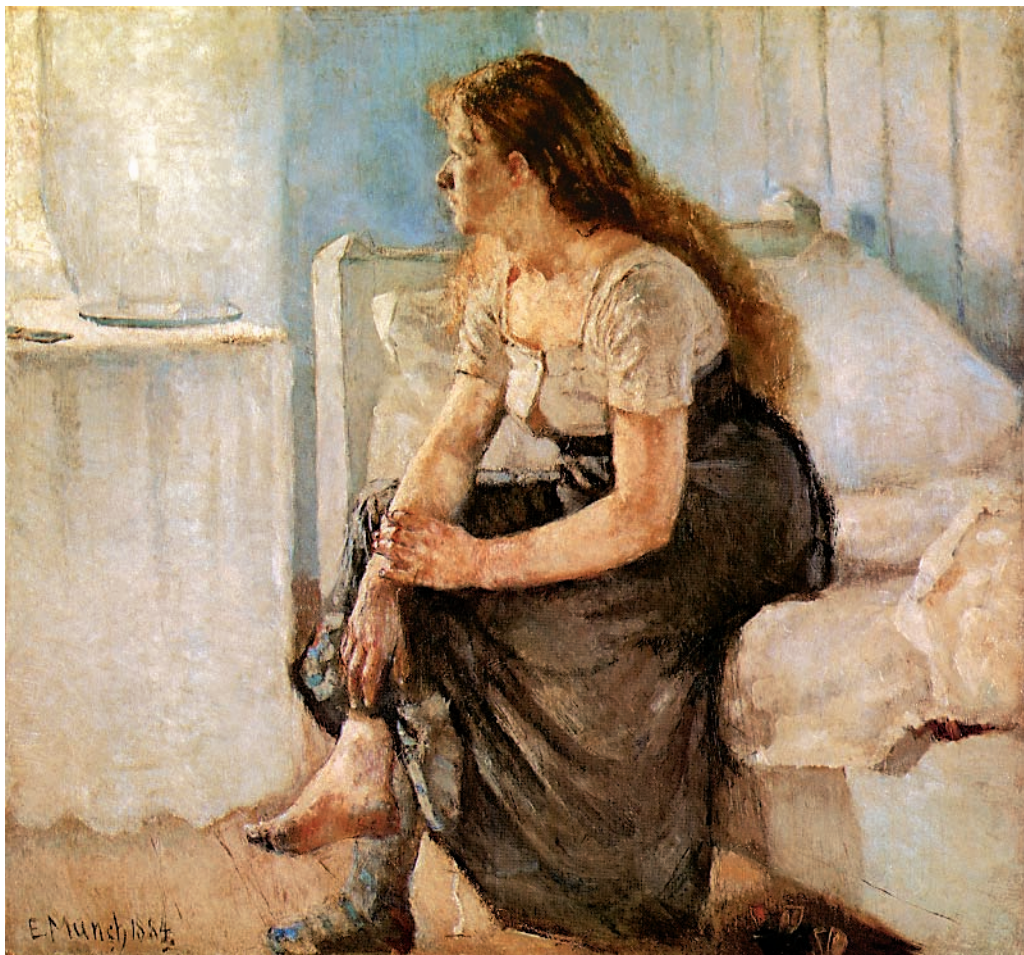
anxiety about offending against Christian principles instilled in them a palpable fear of eternal damnation. The unhappiness of his childhood experience of death was compounded by his father's unpredictable behaviour. Munch and his brother and sisters were never quite sure how their father's fanatical piety was going to manifest itself – but they could rely on the fact

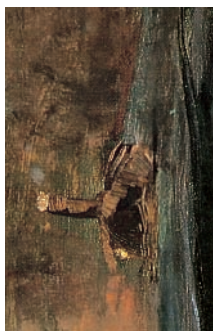
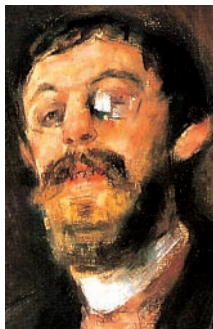
Morning (A Servant Girl)

1884

Oil on canvas, 96.5 x 103.8 cm

Private collection, Bergen





that they would be made to feel inadequate either as dutiful Christians or as obedient children. At times Dr Munch's playful nature, suppressed almost totally by his sadness at the death of his young wife, would resurface briefly and he would play with his children like any normal father. But then the blackness would reassert itself, and he would lash out violently. Indeed,

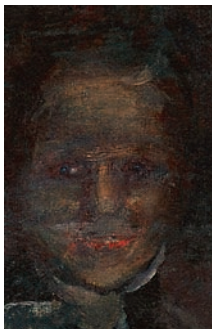
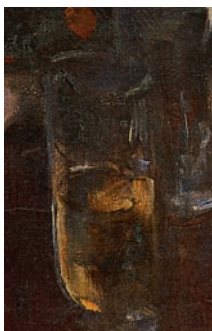
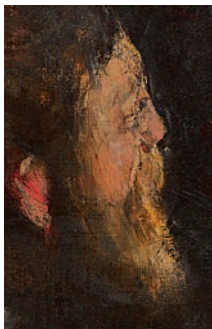
Portrait of the Painter Karl Jensen-Hjell

1885

Oil on canvas, 190 x 100 cm

Private collection





in later life Munch would write that his father became almost insane for short periods. This must have been quite terrifying for a sensitive, quiet young boy who was himself prone to frequent bouts of illness. The death of his sister Sophie, the eldest child, when Edvard was thirteen, caused him even more profound suffering than had the loss of his mother when he was

Tête-à-tête

1885

Oil on canvas, 66 x 76 cm

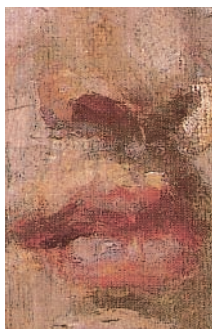
Munch Museum, Oslo





five. He watched anxiously as his father prayed over the girl, unable to do anything for her. To him, and to Sophie, Dr Munch's promises of eternal heaven meant nothing compared with her burning desire to live.

Her struggles were unbearable to watch. Edvard's utter helplessness and sorrow were channelled some years later into a painting that he returned to obsessively:

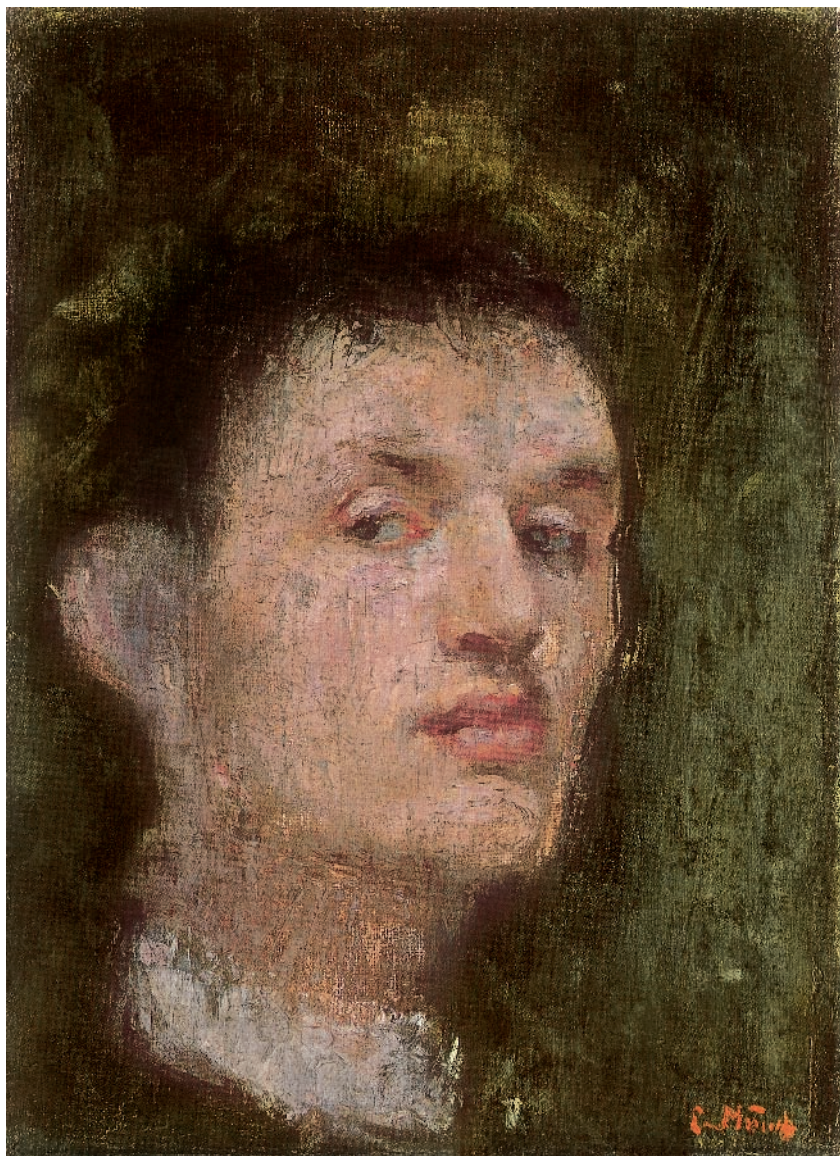


Self-Portrait

1886

Oil on wood, 33 x 24.5 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





the marvellous *The Sick Child*, the first version of which was executed in 1885-1886. (There were to be six versions altogether, created at roughly ten-year intervals.) In this large painting, almost four feet square (120 cm), he struggled throughout his life to express what he felt so intensely about his sister's death. During her last illness she repeatedly pleaded

The Spring

1889

Oil on canvas, 169 x 263.5 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





for help, for relief from pain – neither Edvard nor his doctor father was able to provide it. This incapability was transformed into a feeling of guilt that he had survived and she had not. His attempts to put himself in her place in the picture were doomed to failure, just as he had failed to take her place as she lay dying. To the end of his life he was unable to resolve this.

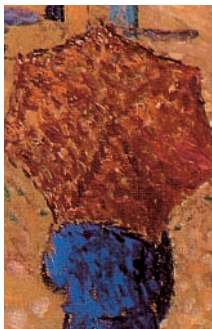
Portrait of the Author Hans Jaeger

1889

Oil on canvas, 109 x 84 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





His guilt is poured into the picture, which is almost unbearably poignant. The young girl's face is already a ghost, almost disembodied as she silently yearns to go on living. With its deep layers of meaning and evocation of the state of the artist's soul, this can fairly be termed one of the first Expressionist paintings. He himself termed it 'a breakthrough' in his style, and the



Spring Day on Karl Johan Street

1890

Oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm

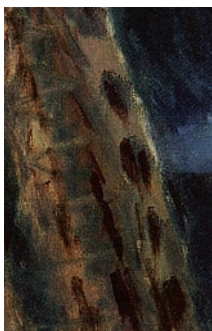
Bergen Billedgalleri, Bergen





collector and critic Jens Thiis, later Munch's biographer, called it 'the first monumental figure painting in our Norwegian art'.¹

The emphasis on religious piety (which appeared to not do the slightest good, as prayers for the life of mother and sister went unheeded), and the authoritarianism of a father who punished disproportionately



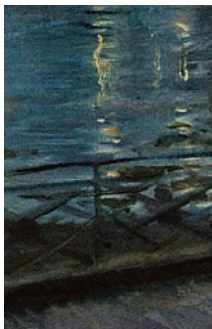
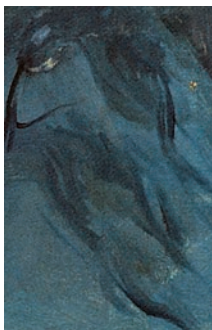
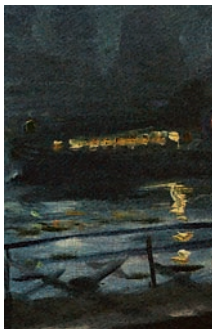
Night in St Cloud

1890

Oil on canvas, 64.5 x 54 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





for the most minor transgressions, came together in Munch's mind to give him a view of God as unjust, full of anger, and entirely without compassion. Although he did not dare to contradict his father by refusing to go to church, by the time he was in his early twenties he had reached the conclusion that God did not exist, and that there was no eternity. This belief in the

The Seine at St Cloud

1890

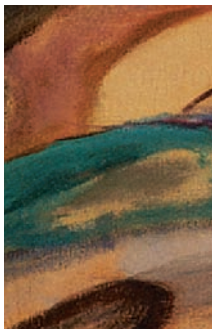
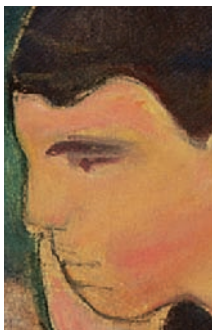
Oil on canvas, 61 x 49.8 cm

Gift from Mrs Morris Hadley

(Katherine Blodgett class of 1920), 1962

The Frances and Lehman Loeb Art Center,
Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York





non-existence of God remained broadly unaltered throughout the rest of his life, though he changed his mind about the possibility of a continued existence in a kind of afterlife. With some bravery, Munch took the decision to become a painter in the face of his father's firm preference that he should study engineering. His father reluctantly acceded, on the advice of a

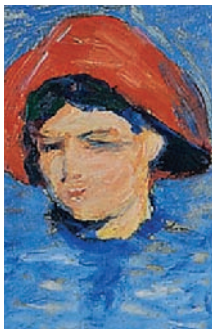
Melancholy

1891

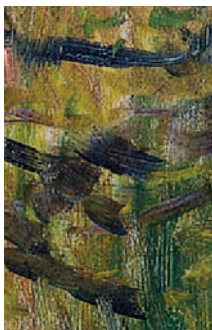
Oil on canvas, 72 x 98 cm

Private collection





draughtsman friend. One of Munch's earliest self-portraits, from a year or so later (*Self-Portrait*, 1881-1882), shows a young man of sensitive, even sickly aspect, his large pale face, full curving lips, and sloping shoulders giving little cause to credit him with any kind of physical or mental toughness. Yet there is, in the clear gaze, something of a challenge to the onlooker who might thus dismiss him.



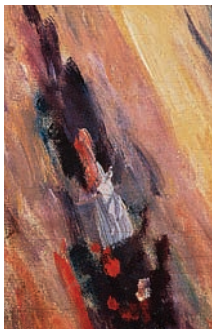
Woman in Blue against Blue Water

1891

Oil on canvas, 99 x 65.5 cm

Private collection





After their mother's death, the children were comforted a little by the advent of her younger sister Karen, who came into the family and took over as housekeeper and governess. She had done some dabbling in painting herself, and quickly came to recognise that Edvard had an unusual talent. Later in life, he greatly valued her encouragement, although at

Rue de Rivoli

1891

Oil on canvas, 81 x 65.1 cm

Gift from Rudolf Serkin, 1963, Harvard Art Museums
Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts





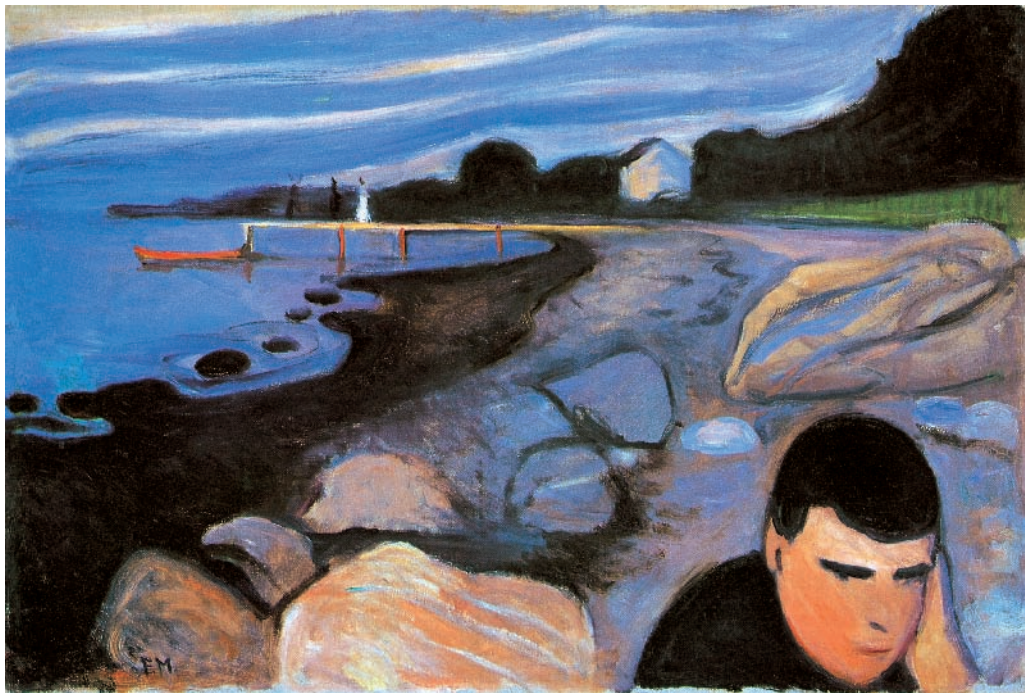
first he did not appreciate it as much as he might. A portrait of his aunt painted in 1884 (*Karen Bjølstad in a Rocking Chair*) goes some way to making amends – the calm young woman is portrayed sitting in the window, gently rocking herself. His portraits of this period are strikingly mature, particularly that of his sister Inger, which reveals a young girl with great

Melancholy

1892

Oil on canvas, 64 x 96 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





strength of character in her sombre, slightly averted gaze (*Inger Munch*, 1884). Norway was an artistic backwater at this time – the few major painters of the period included Christian Krohg, Frits Thaulow, and Erik Werenskiold, who formed the native school, with its keynote of naturalism. They mounted their first Autumn Exhibition in 1882, beginning a regular series that at first met with much critical disapproval.

Moonlight on the Coast

1892

Oil on canvas, 62.5 x 96 cm

Private collection, Bergen





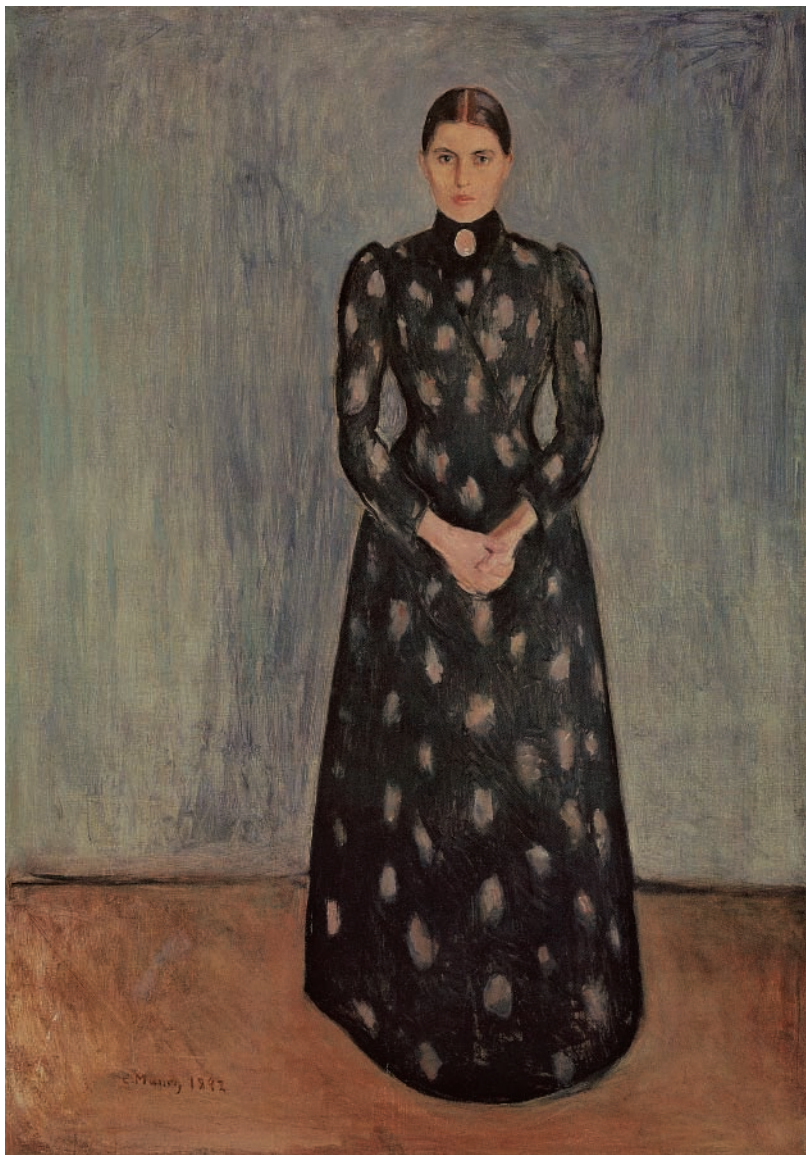
Manet was their idol, their lodestar. Munch embraced this group warmly, and in the course of some months was taught how to use colour by Krohg. However, he felt he had to go abroad to gain the stimulus and training he needed. In 1885, he was enabled to go to Paris thanks to the generosity of Thaulow, a frequent supporter, and grants from various

Portrait of Inger, the Artist's Sister

1892

Oil on canvas on wood, 172.5 x 122.5 cm

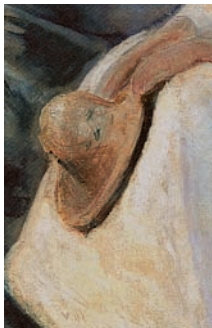
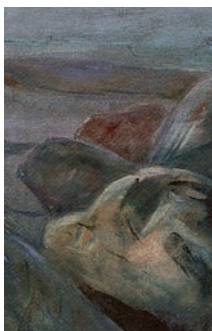
Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





bodies. Thaulow – Gauguin’s brother-in-law, as it happens – not only gave him moral and financial support in the face of critical hostility, but also bought one of his earliest successes, *Morning (A Servant Girl)* of 1884.

Before he left for Paris, Munch met the woman who was to cause him perhaps the deepest grief and psychological damage of his emotional life: Emilie (Milly)



Summer Night / Inger at the Beach

1889

Oil on canvas, 126.4 x 161.7 cm

Rasmus Meyers Collection, Bergen Art Museum, Bergen





Thaulow. He was now twenty-two; she was twenty-four, married to his cousin Carl, and with no moral scruples about engaging in an adulterous affair. She was beautiful and blonde in a classic Scandinavian way, and admirers flocked round her. She toyed with Munch, who fell heavily for her. At first they enjoyed a lovers' idyll, but he was unable to retain the interest of

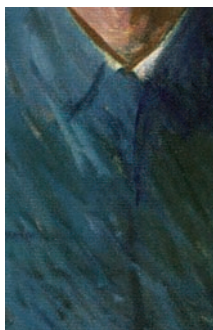
Evening on Karl Johan Street

1892

Oil on canvas, 85.5 x 121 cm

Rasmus Meyers Collection, Bergen Art Museum, Bergen





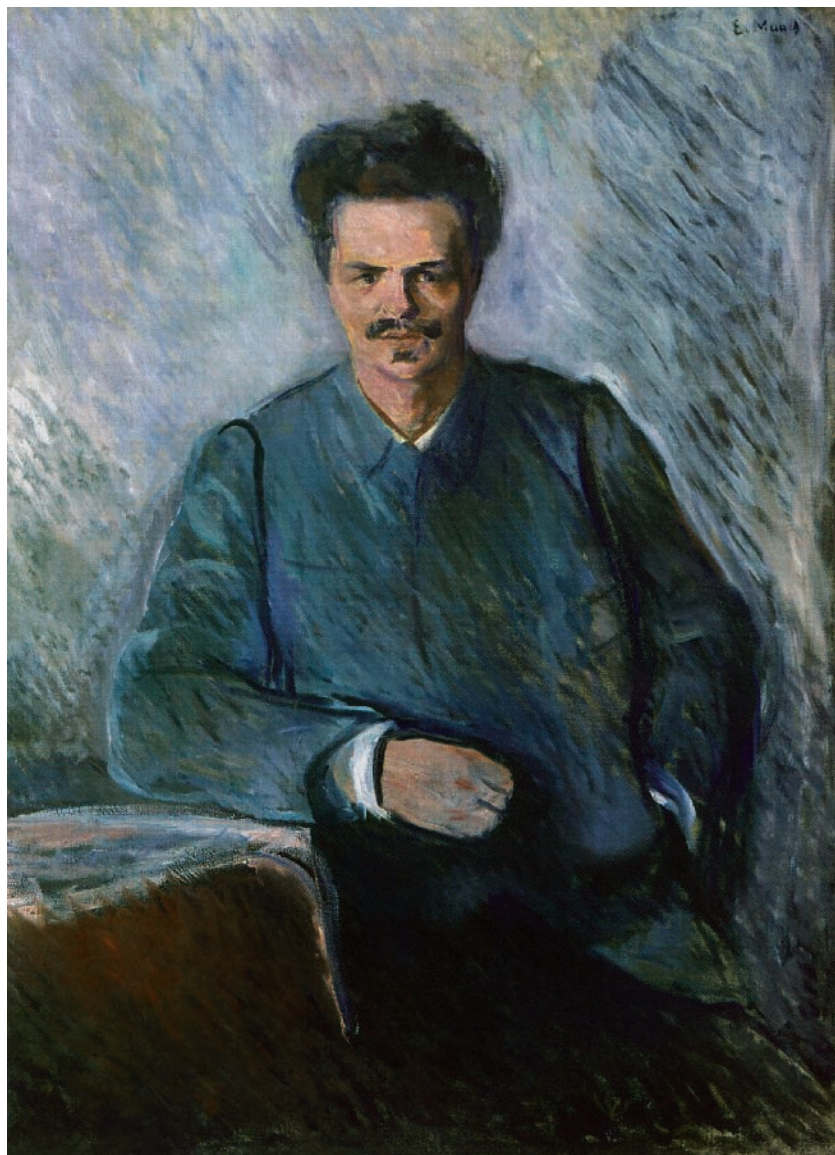
this sensual and amoral woman for long. Munch continued to show work at the regular Autumn Exhibitions in Oslo, but the critics took not the slightest notice of his offerings at the 1887 show. Feeling neglected and slighted professionally, he was reduced to a state of deep neurosis when he realised that the experienced Milly was not after all faithful to him.

The Author August Strindberg

1892

Oil on canvas, 122 x 91 cm

Gift from the artist, 1934, Moderna Museet, Stockholm





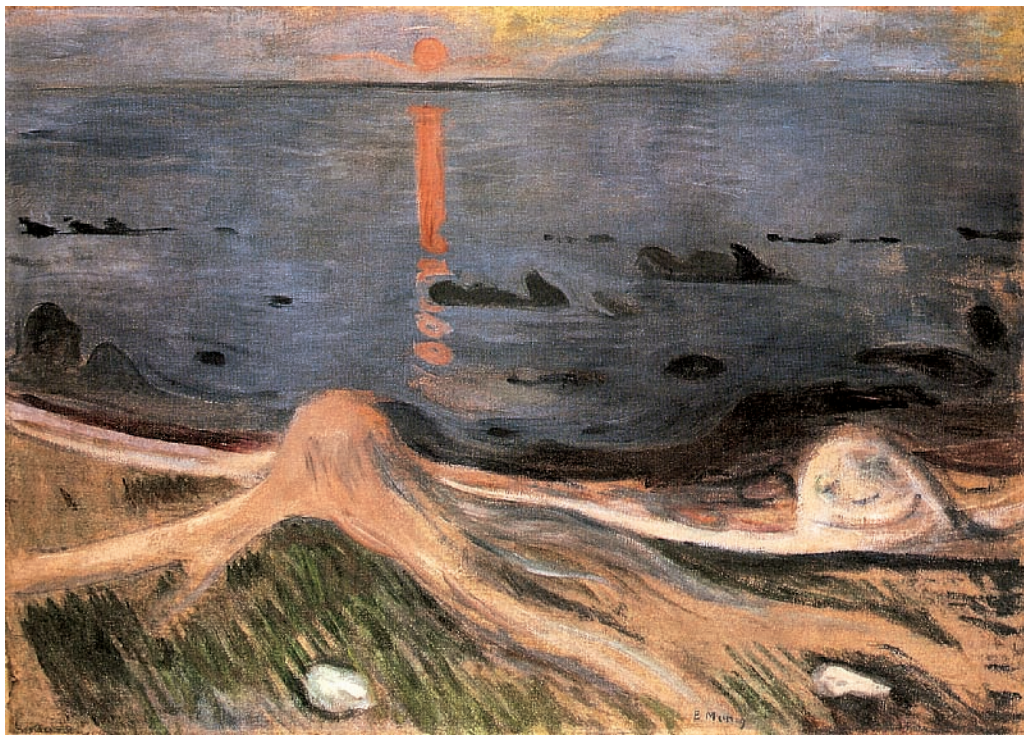
His love for her, always slightly unhealthy, now became an obsession, fuelled by the fact that she made it clear she was out of his reach. He kept a precarious hold on his sanity by pouring out his feelings into his semi-fictional diaries, a form of release that he relied on throughout most of his life. In Paris, where his arrival was delayed by a year

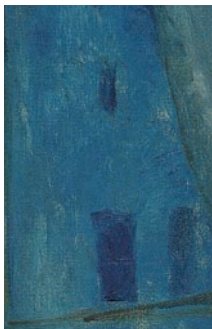
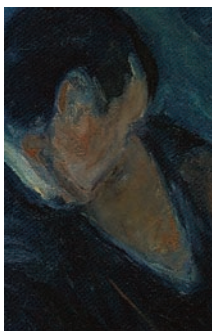
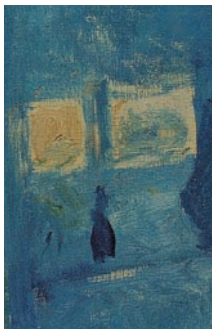
The Mystery of a Summer Night

1892

Oil on canvas, 86.5 x 124.5 cm

Private collection





through a bout of severe illness, he saw the work of the leading painters of the day: the Impressionists, the Post-Impressionists, and the Symbolists. There is an unmistakably Manet-like quality to some of the full-length portraits that followed, while the style of Émile Bernard and Puvis de Chavannes is strongly evoked by the colours and shapes of a picture such as

The Kiss

1892

Oil on canvas, 73 x 92 cm

The National Museum of Art, Architecture,
and Design/National Gallery, Oslo





Summer Night / Inger at the Beach (1889). Another clear influence is that of the Pointillists: *Spring Day on Karl Johan Street* (1890) could almost have been painted by Pissarro or Signac. This sojourn in the French capital affected his work profoundly and resulted in Krohg's eventual description of him as Norway's first and only Impressionist.



Starry Night

1893

Oil on canvas, 135.2 x 140 cm

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles





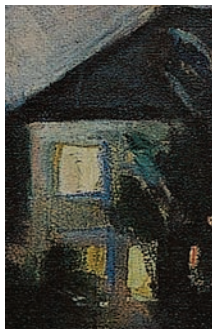
Over this and successive visits to France, he imbibed other important influences: he very much admired Van Gogh and Gauguin, and drew stylistic inspiration from Odilon Redon, Pierre Bonnard, and Edouard Vuillard, as well as from the flowing forms and brilliant colours of Art Nouveau and the recently discovered Japonaiserie that had partly inspired it.

Summer Night's Dream (The Voice)

1893

Oil on canvas, 87.9 x 108 cm
 Ernest Wadsworth Longfellow Fund,
 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston





Struggling against the materialism, conservatism, and provincialism of late 19th-century Christiania, a group of intellectuals had gathered around 1886 under the leadership of the writer Hans Jaeger. 'Christiania's Bohemia' adopted Munch, who embraced the group's values enthusiastically – the movement took its name from Jaeger's book – and was inspired to paint some

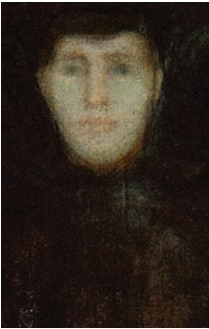
The Storm

1893

Oil on canvas, 91.8 x 130.8 cm

Gift from Mr and Mrs H. Irgens Larsen and acquired
through the Lillie P. Bliss and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Funds
The Museum of Modern Art, New York





outstanding works, such as *The Men of Letters* (1887). Jaeger and his fellow bohemians believed in everything Munch's father disliked and distrusted – atheism, free love, alcohol, and anarchy. The breakdown in relations between father and son worsened, and never healed. Munch's work was not favourably received by the critics – a reaction wearily familiar to his Impressionist

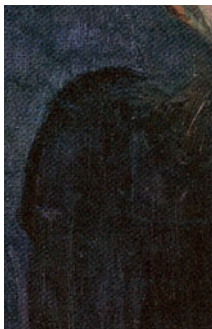
Moonlight

1893

Oil on canvas, 140.5 x 135 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





colleagues in France – but he defended himself vigorously and his sensitive soul was surprisingly robust in the face of such attacks. It all helped to push him further in the ‘bohemian’ direction, though his art developed of its own accord under its creator’s confidence in its worth. But the *Zeitgeist*, embracing both Impressionism and its antithesis, Symbolism, informed

Dagny Juel Przybyszewska

1893

Oil on canvas, 148.5 x 99.5 cm
Munch Museum, Oslo



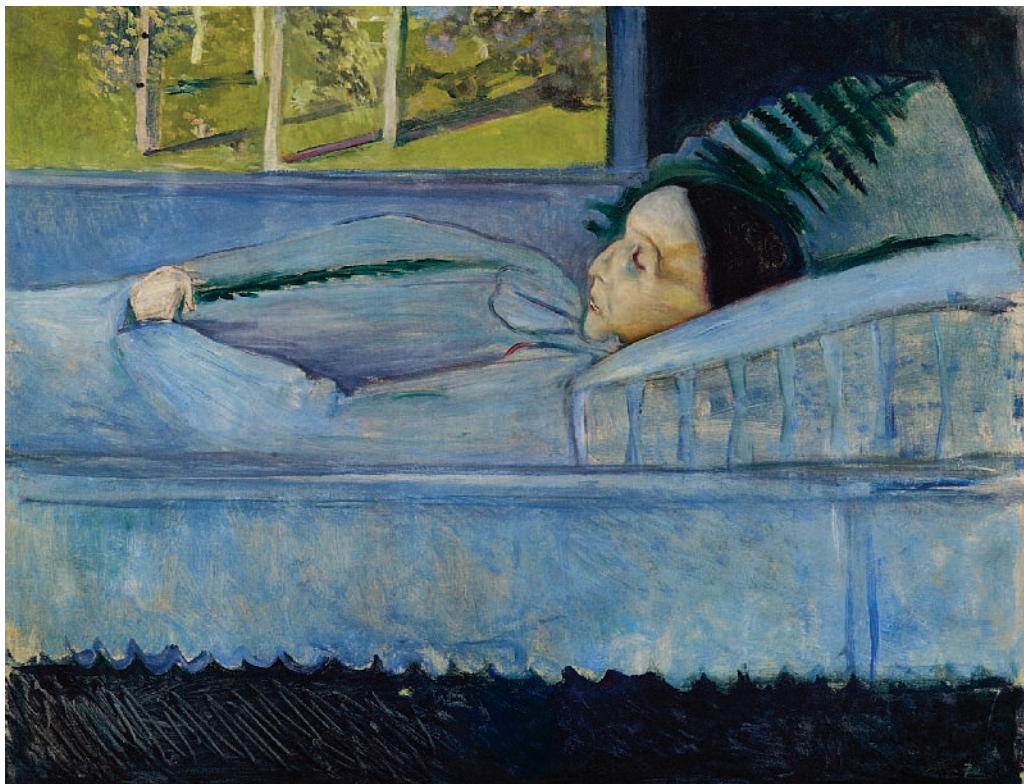


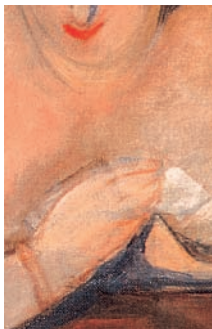
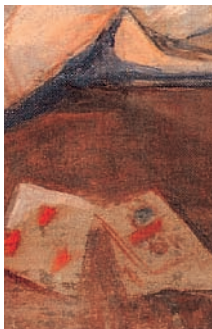
his work and was influential in shaping his ideas. This is exemplified in *Spring Evening on Karl Johan Street* (1892). What a powerful dichotomy we have here! The crowded pavement is full of movement, yet the figures are dressed as if in mourning, and the features of the nearest walkers are almost skull-like – not much sign of spring here. Hostility and incomprehension

Death and Spring

1893

Oil on canvas, 73 x 94.5 cm
Munch Museum, Oslo





are apparent on the faces staring at the artist's panic-filled attempts to find Milly, his obsessional love. A clamp-down by the Norwegian government on the free-thinking, free-living ideas of the bohemians, which went so far as to imprison Jaeger for publishing an 'immoral' novel in 1885, led to a rethink among avant-garde painters, who now turned to themes from

Rose and Amélie

1893

Oil on canvas, 78 x 109 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





nature as being relatively safer than their previous preoccupations with sex and unbridled emotion.

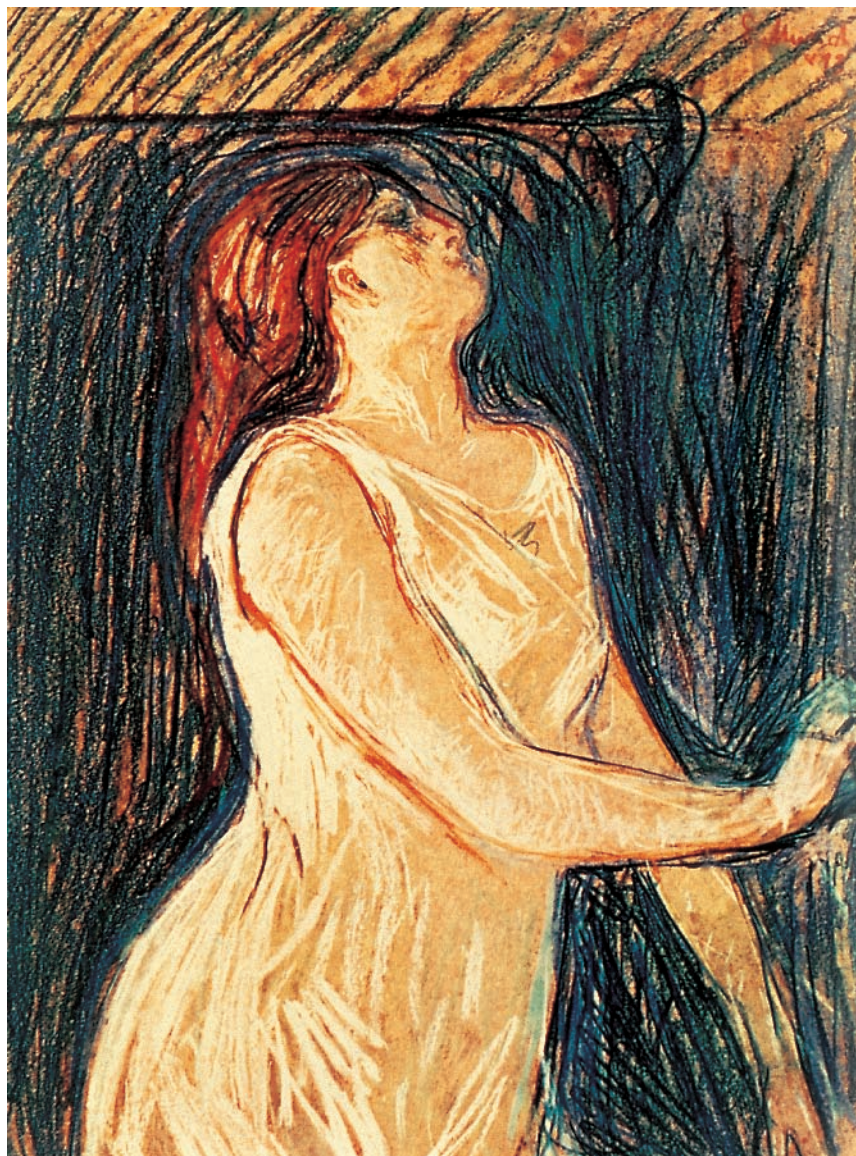
All the intellectuals and artists in Scandinavia suffered to some extent under this atmosphere of stifling bourgeois smugness, which seemed so retrogressive to those who were pushing for the acceptance of new ideas, and new political and social freedoms.

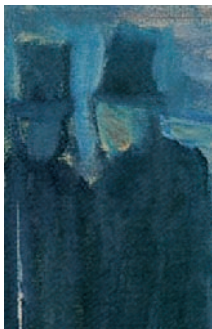
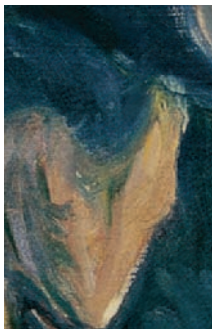
Sketch of the Model Posing

1893

Pastel on cardboard, 76.5 x 53 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York





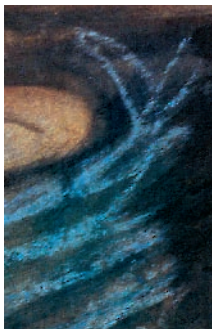
Munch succeeded in putting on a solo exhibition at the University in the spring of 1889 – the first such exhibition ever to be mounted in Norway. He was never afraid of his own talent, nor was he burdened with false modesty. It was quite an achievement for a young man: 110 works in all were shown, with a mixed critical reception. But it paved the way for a

Despair

1892

Oil on canvas, 92 x 67 cm
Thielska Galleriet, Stockholm





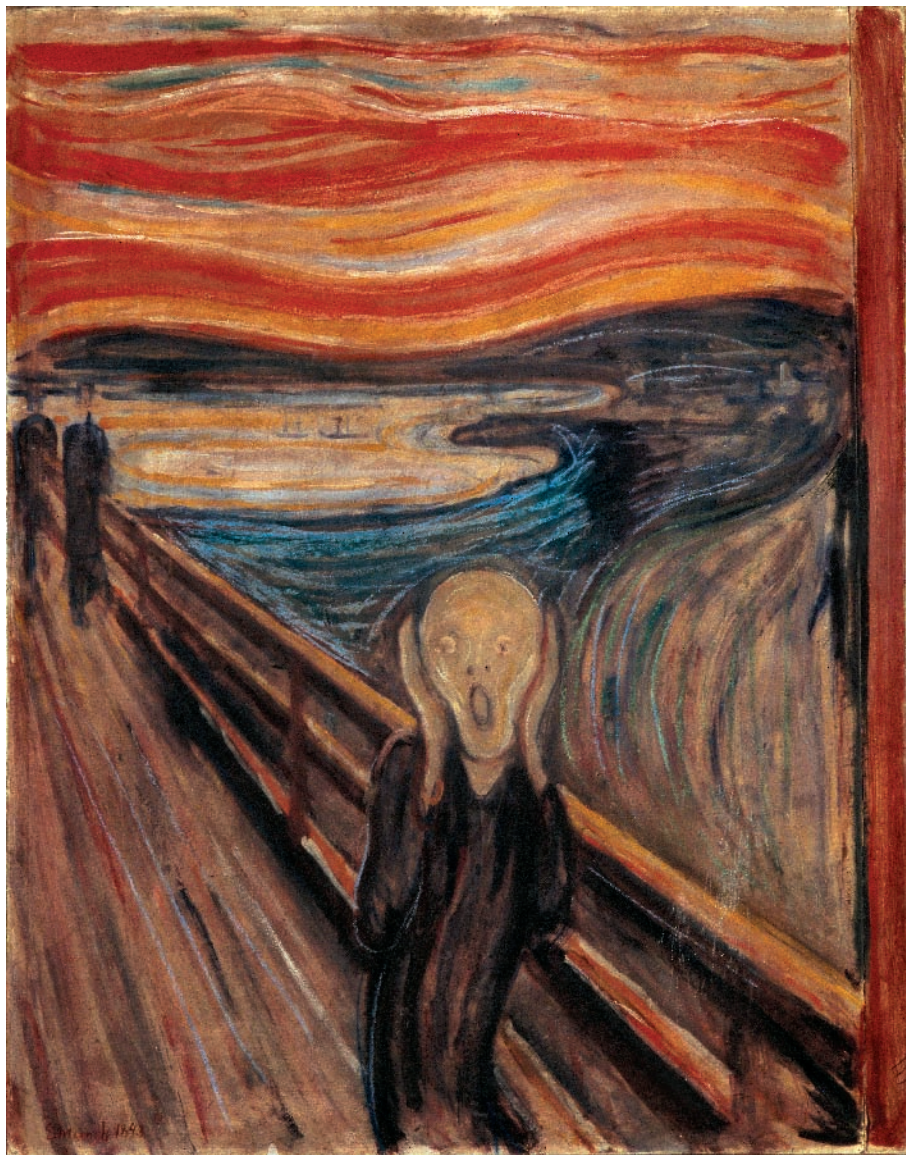
state grant, and served notice that here was a young artist to watch. Munch spent the summer of 1889, the first of many, at Åsgårdstrand, on the coast, along with his sister Inger and friends Christian Krohg and his wife Oda, Gunnar Heiberg, Hans Heyerdahl, and others.

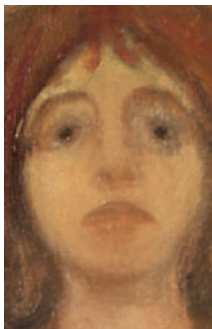
He loved this simple life, and returned to it whenever he could. Various relationships developed or unravelled

The Scream

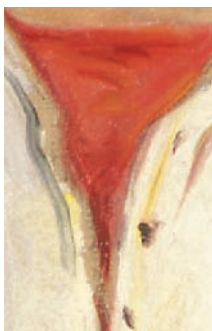
1893

Tempera and pastel on cardboard, 91 x 73.5 cm
 Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





there – that year his sister found herself on the brink of marriage, which came to naught, while his friends Christian and Oda Krohg were mending their commitment to each other following the three-way love affair involving Jaeger, terminated the previous year amid the drama of a suicide pact which failed in an almost risible fashion. The birth of a baby to the Krohgs

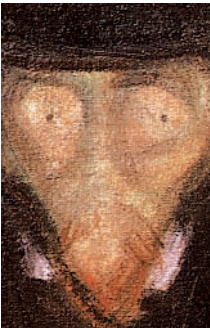
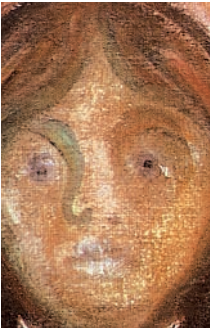


Ashes

1894

Oil and tempera on canvas, 120.5 x 141 cm
 Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





seemed to bring calm to their ménage, but it was not to be for long, since Oda would become involved a couple of years later with a younger man, Jappe Nilssen; the jealousies thus aroused became the subject of several of Munch's finest works. (It is Jappe whose features recur in the *Yellow Boat* pictures, such as *Melancholy*.) The free love ethic which Jaeger had

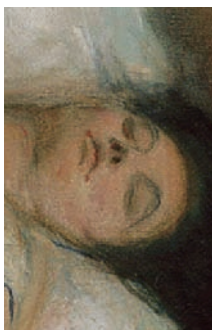
Anxiety

1894

Oil on canvas, 94 x 74 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





advocated so vehemently threatened the equilibrium of everyone in the circle, because none of them were able to overcome the corrosive feelings that such 'freedom' gave rise to. Munch, whose relations with women were never to prove satisfactory, fell gently in love, too, that summer. His love was never declared – possibly because he was still suffering from his

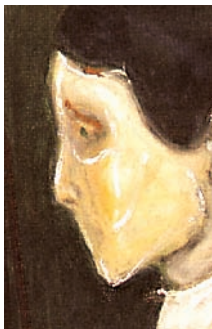
The Day After

1894-1895

Oil on canvas, 115 x 152 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





catastrophic entanglement with Milly, which always seemed to trump any other emotional involvement. The girl in question was a young painter called Aase Carlsen, and we do not know if she returned his feelings – probably not, since she married that year. Munch remained close to her and her husband, Harald Nørregård, and some years later produced a

Eye in Eye

1894

Oil on canvas, 136 x 110 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





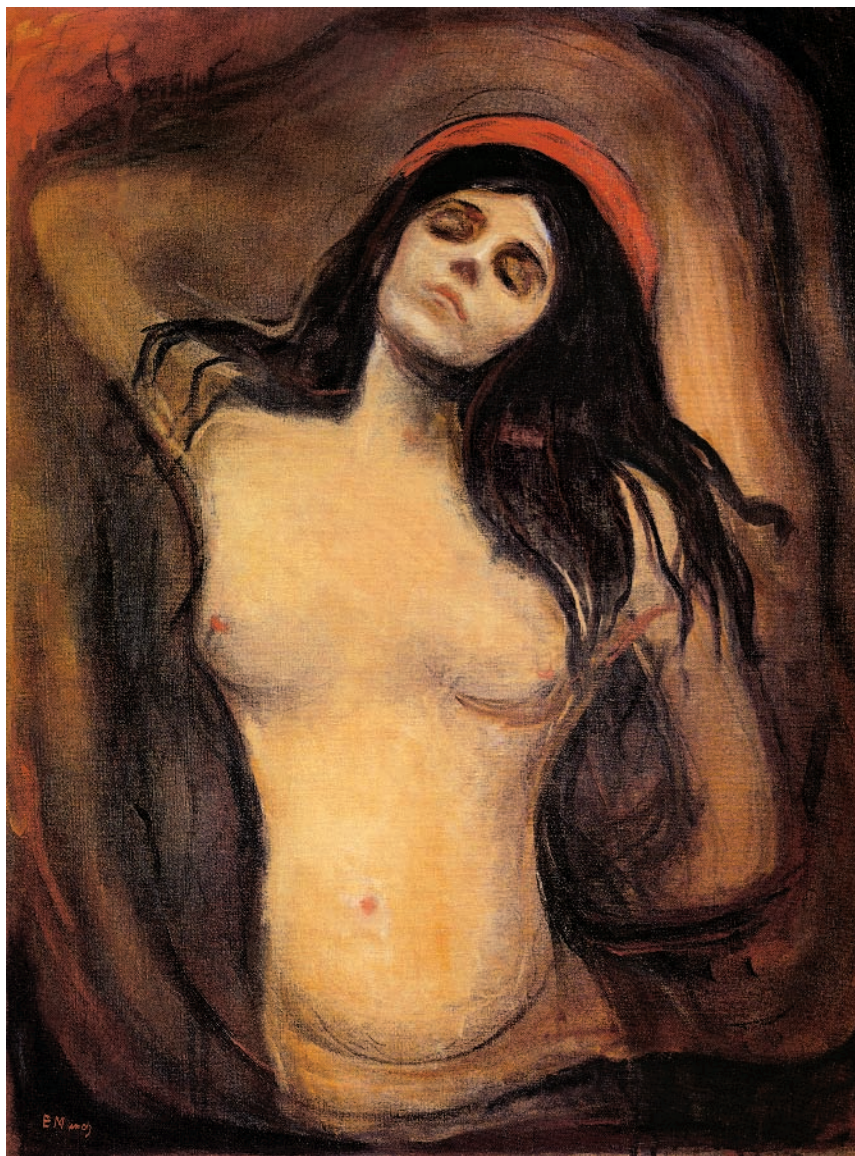
fine double portrait, a loving interpretation of their happy marriage (*Portrait of Harald and Aase Nørregård*, 1899). He came to rely on Aase as one of the few women who would not threaten him or disturb his peace of mind, and at her death in 1908 he wrote sorrowfully to Harald that he had lost his best female friend.

Madonna

1894

Oil on canvas, 90 x 68.5 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





In Paris in late 1889, Munch received a letter from his aunt Karen telling him that his father had died suddenly. This news precipitated a psychological crisis: because he had comprehensively rejected Christianity and the idea of an all-protecting God, he felt that his father had been simply blotted out of existence, that there was no possibility of an afterlife. He knew he

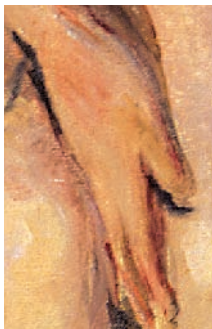
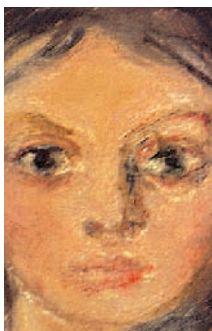
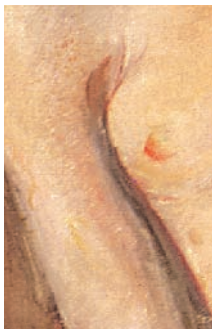
The Woman in Three Stages (Sphinx)

c. 1894

Oil on canvas, 164 x 250 cm

Rasmus Meyers Collection, Bergen Kunstmuseum, Bergen





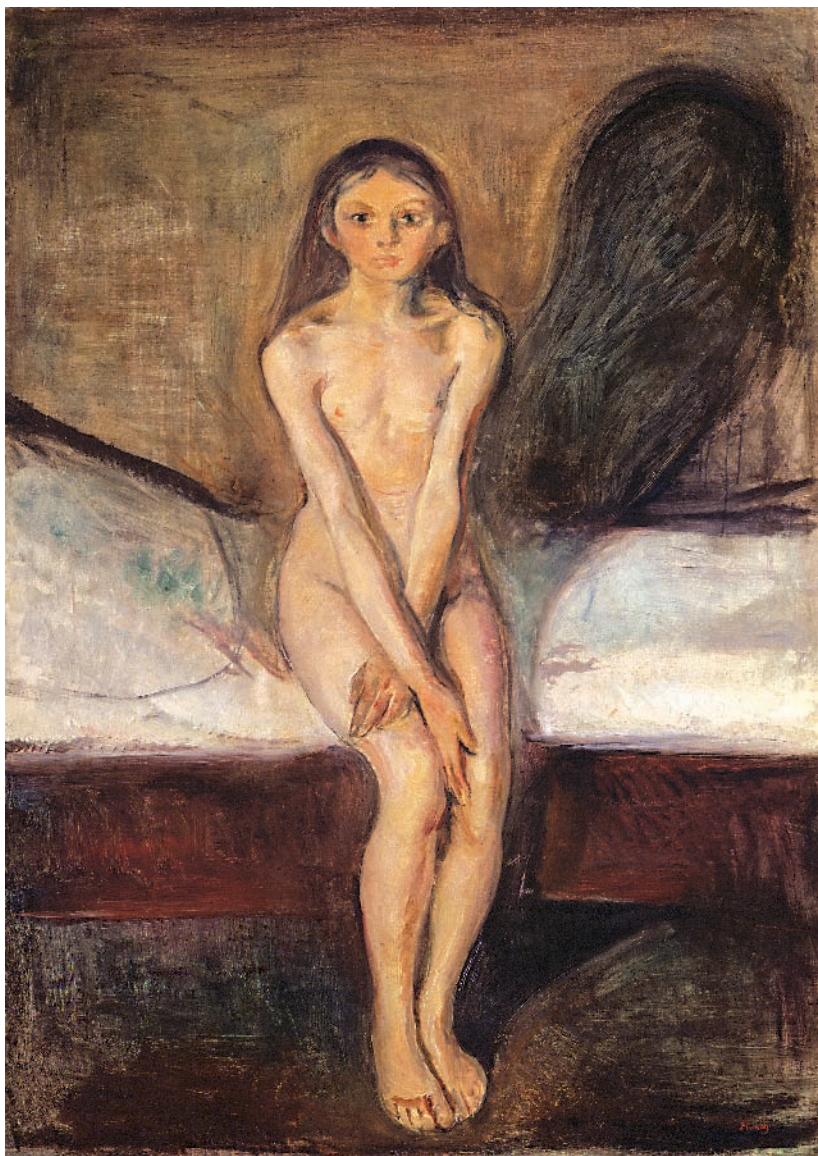
had been a little unfair in his judgement of his father's actions and behaviour when the children were young, and the terrible feeling of guilt and loneliness was very hard for him to express – the only way he could visualise his father's end was to picture him walking endlessly down a bleak and empty road (*Allegory of Death – the Barren Road*, 1889-1890). For a time he was unable to work.

Puberty

1894-1895

Oil on canvas, 151.5 x 110 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





A consolation at this time was his close friendship with the young Danish poet Emanuel Goldstein. Goldstein, too, had undergone a tumultuous love affair, and the shared experience of unrequited love meant that they recognised each other as kindred spirits. Both saw women as vampires, feasting on the lifeblood of the men who loved them. So intense was

The Hands

1895

Lithograph in black ink on cream card, 48.5 x 29.2 cm
Clarence Buckingham Collection,
The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago





this relationship that one might even guess at a homosexual element, never expressed or admitted. Munch's semi-fictional 'diary' was very important to him, and he kept it assiduously, seeing in it the basis of a novel about his life. But there is no hint that this friendship was sexual in any way. Gradually, he pulled out of the pit of despair, and even began to

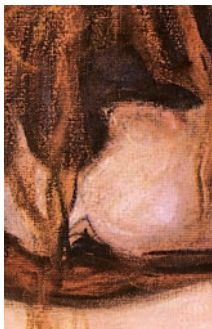
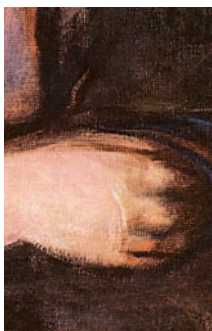
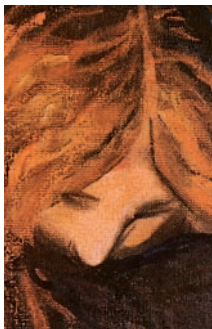
Loving Woman (Madonna)

1895-1902

Coloured lithograph, 60.6 x 44.6 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





accept the possibility of everlasting life – but as part of the cycle of nature rather than in a Christian heaven. He embraced Symbolism, finding himself very much in tune with its aims and ideals, and indeed adopted the word to describe his own work, defining it in his notes as ‘Nature ... transformed according to one’s subjective disposition’,² or what Reinhold Heller calls

Vampire

1895

Oil on canvas, 91 x 109 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





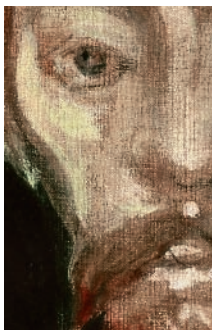
‘the transforming activity of the artist’s mind, mood, or emotions’.³ As a direct result of his 1889 exhibition in Christiania, partly because of the reigning fashion for all things Nordic in Berlin, above all literature and art, Munch was invited to show his work at the Association of Berlin Artists in 1892. The head of the Association was closely connected with the Imperial court, so there

Stanisław Przybyszewski (with Skeleton Arm)

1895

Tempera on canvas, 75 x 60 cm
Munch Museum, Oslo





was hope that he might find influential patrons. However, the section showing his group of paintings did not survive the critical disapproval, closing after just a week. The members of the Association's committee who did not know Munch's work were appalled at the frankness of some of the subjects. A huge fuss blew up, with political repercussions

Jealousy

1895

Oil on canvas, 66.8 x 100 cm

Rasmus Meyers Collection, Bergen Art Museum, Bergen





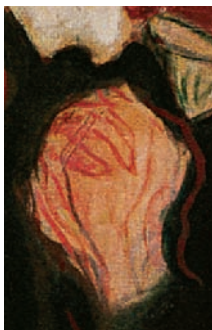
reaching as high up as the Imperial court, and the affair was splashed all over the newspapers. The rest of the group of Norwegian painters withdrew their work, too, after it was felt that they were being belittled. The resulting row led ultimately (in 1899) to the secession of the younger, more avant-garde Berlin painters, in a movement that mirrored the earlier secessions in Munich (1892) and Vienna (1897).

Death in the Sickroom

c. 1895

Tempera and pastel on canvas, 152.5 x 169.5 cm
 Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





Munch, who as a result of the scandal had become more famous than perhaps he wished to be, had many supporters among the younger group, who soon found themselves in alliance with the writers that were making an impact in the city, among them was Strindberg, who had moved there from Sweden.

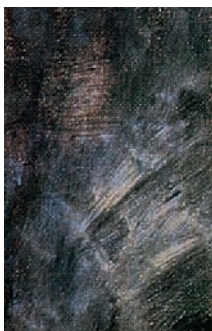
By the Deathbed

1895

Oil on canvas, 90.2 x 120.5 cm

Rasmus Meyers Collection, Bergen Art Museum, Bergen





The critic Julius Meyer-Graefe was another Munch champion. For some time Munch had been contemplating the idea of collecting some of his paintings together in a series, called variously *Love* or *The Frieze of Life*. The aim was to paint 'living people who breathe, feel, suffer, and love'.⁴ The whole series was never exactly clear-cut, and the pictures that he included

Self-Portrait with Cigarette

1895

Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 85.5 cm
Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





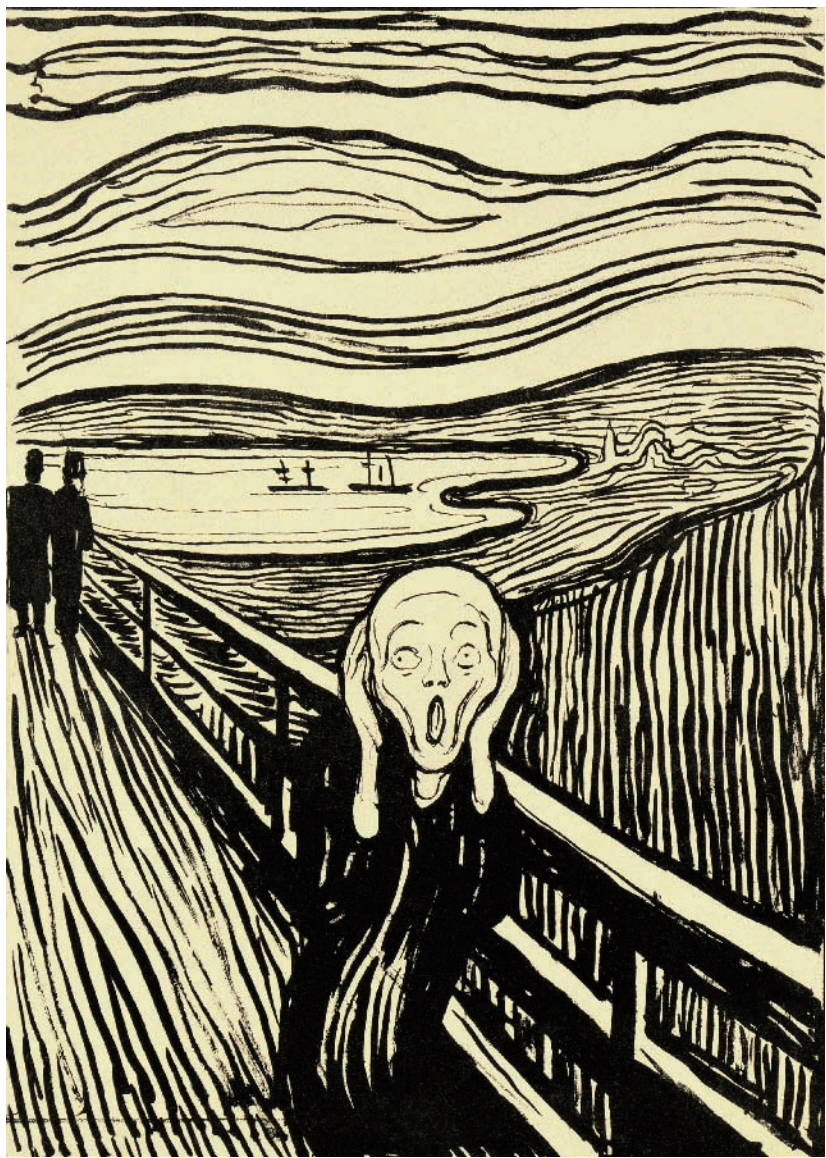
in it varied to some extent from year to year and exhibition to exhibition, but there are certain major masterpieces that are considered a definite core. Some pictures that had been painted before he conceived the idea of the series were later found eminently apt for inclusion in it. There were various attempts to exhibit the series as a whole at different

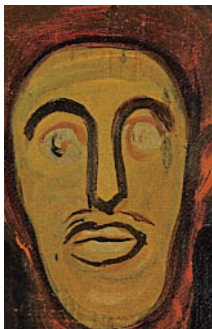
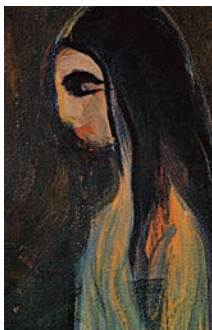
The Scream

1895

Lithograph, 35.5 x 25.4 cm

Private collection





stages of the artist's career, but they did not always come off. Only after his death were the paintings actually drawn together in one exhibition space, the Munch Museum in Oslo. It is, one supposes, not surprising that he kept revising the contents of the series – the way Munch worked was to return to the same subject several times, in various media, and he

Young Girl with Three Male Heads

1895-1898

Oil on canvas, 90 x 100 cm

Der Kunstverein in Bremen – Kunsthalle Bremen, Bremen





might well have thought that one or another of his earlier works on a theme had failed to quite express what he wanted it to say.

In his somewhat shifting perceptions of male and female interaction, he came to see the sexual impulse as holy, and loving sexual intercourse as a sacred act ensuring posterity. The group of outstanding pictures



Man's Head in Woman's Hair

1896

Woodcut with watercolour additions, 54.5 x 38.5 cm
Munch Museum, Oslo





on the theme of sexual love and longing sums up his feelings about women: he longs for love, trusts in the holiness of the act of love to impregnate and continue the species, but is then wracked with jealousy and distrust, finally succumbing to despair. The *Frieze of Life* series covers this gamut of emotions in *Man and Woman*, *The Kiss*, *Madonna*, *The Vampire*, *The Yellow Boat*

Attraction II

1896

Lithograph in black ink on off-white woven paper
hand-coloured in blue watercolour, 38.3 x 60.4 cm

Purchase through the generosity of Lynn and Philip A. Straus
Class of 1937, Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts





(*Jealousy*), and *The Scream*. *The Kiss* was one of Munch's most constantly revisited and reworked themes. The forms of the man and woman merge into one being, an expression of sexual ecstasy subsuming the individuals and leading to their extinction. In this, Munch is perhaps giving form to Wagner's concept of Love-Death, the *Liebested* that shines darkly throughout

Separation II from "The Mirror"

1896

Lithograph in black ink with graphite accents on blue woven paper discoloured to brown, 39.8 x 59.8 cm

Purchase through the generosity of Lynn and Philip A. Straus Class of 1937, Harvard Art Museums, Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts





his groundbreaking opera *Tristan and Isolde*. In an etching and aquatint of the subject done in 1895, the man and woman are naked. The theme is developed with several *Young Woman and Death* pictures, in which a girl is closely embraced by a skeleton. The painting of the *Madonna* explicitly depicts the point at which the woman experiences a sexual climax, and

Separation

1896

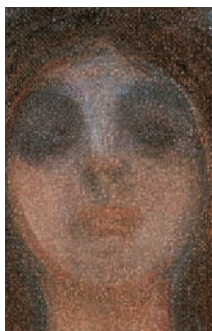
Oil on canvas, 96.5 x 127 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





her partner, from whose viewpoint we look down on her, sees the 'holy moment' when she is impregnated and becomes the universal mother. This beautiful work, with its unearthly greenish flesh and bright halo, was reworked as a drypoint and as a hand-coloured lithograph a few years later, with foetuses or sperm decorating the borders.



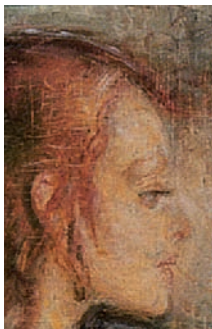
The Voice / Summer Night

1896

Oil on unprimed canvas, 90 x 119.5 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





The *Vampire* also recurs many times in Munch's oeuvre. What began as an image of a woman tenderly planting a kiss on her lover's neck was gradually transformed into a vision of the woman as evil, bloodsucking, and life-destroying. Much of his unhappiness at the hands of Milly Thaulow and, later, Tulla Larsen found its way into these paintings and

The Sick Child

1896

Oil on canvas, 121.5 x 118.5 cm
Göteborg Museum of Art, Göteborg





drawings, such as *The Beast* (1902). *Jealousy* was another stage in the war between the sexes; it showed Dagny's lover, Jappe Nilssen. *Despair* was renamed *The Scream*, giving voice to the artist's feelings on the subject of love and sex, 'I looked at the flaming clouds that hung like blood and a sword over the blue-black fjord and city ... I stood there, trembling with fright.

Self-Portrait with Lyre

1896-1897

Pencil and gouache on paper, 68.5 x 52.5 cm
Munch Museum, Oslo





And I felt a loud, unending scream piercing nature.¹⁵ His retrospective, censored in Berlin, was shown in various major European cities which were less hidebound and more ready to accept his aesthetic, and it fuelled a new respect for his genius. He soon found himself starting to make modest sales to collectors in Munich, where the seceding Norwegian

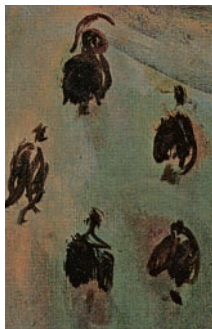
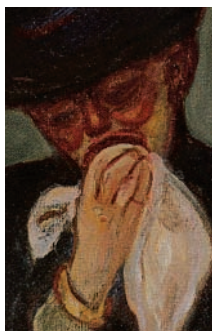
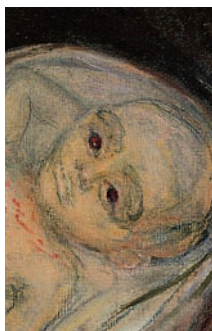
The Dead Mother

1897-1899

Oil on canvas, 104.5 x 179.5 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





painters had sent their work, and Dresden, and was able to send money home to support his brother and sisters. An anthology of critical writings on his work was published in 1894, with essays by Przybyszewski, Servaes, Meyer-Graefe, and Pastor. All this did much to raise his spirits and encouraged him to work harder. Munch felt very much at home in Berlin, in spite of his unfortunate initial reception.

Inheritance I

1897-1899

Oil on canvas, 141 x 120 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





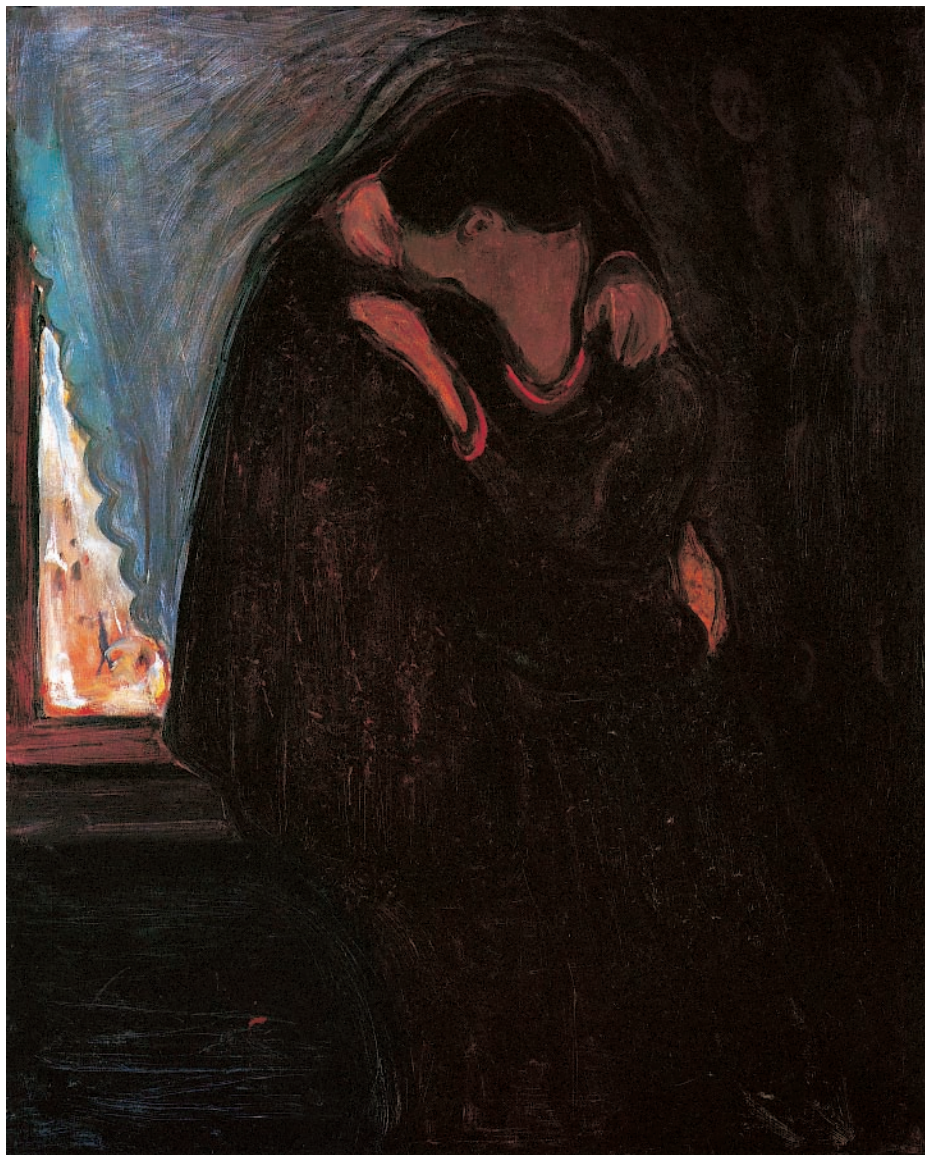
He had a great admiration for German cultural heroes such as Wagner and Nietzsche, and was particularly drawn to the work of Arnold Böcklin, painter of *The Isle of the Dead*. He soon found himself part of another bohemian circle that admired his work and understood what he was trying to do. His friends included, besides Meyer-Graefe and Strindberg, the poet

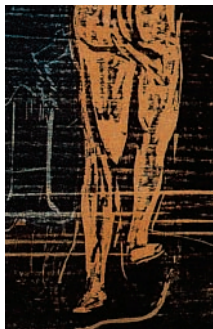
The Kiss

1897

Oil on canvas, 99 x 81 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





Richard Dehmel, the novelist Stanislaw Przybyszewski, and a number of Scandinavian artists who had collected in the heady, free atmosphere of turn-of-the-century Berlin. The writer and critic Jens Thiis was among them. A poor artist in the garret, Munch produced some of his most memorable works here, among them *Puberty* (1895), which caused another

Towards the Forest I

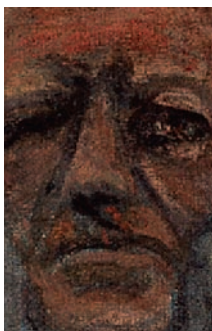
1897

Woodcut printed from two blocks

(one sawn into three sections) in black, blue and brownish orange ink on ivory Japanese paper, 52.3 x 64.4 cm

Collection of Catherine Woodard and Nelson Blitz, Jr.





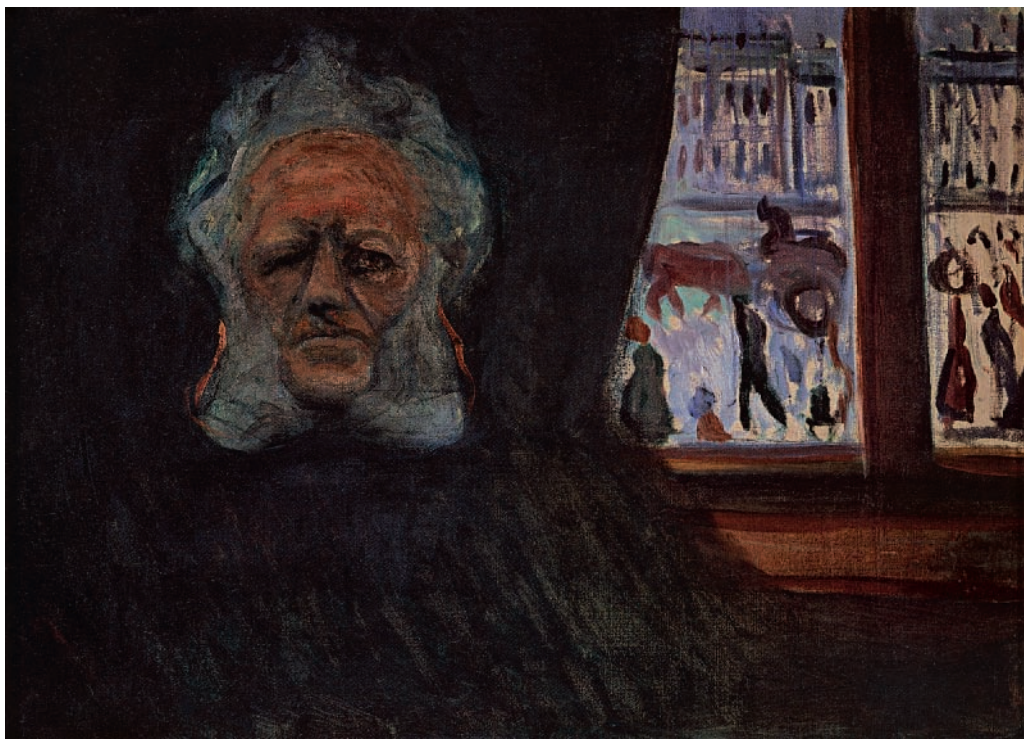
scandal with its frank perception of a shy young girl's awakening sexuality. He also produced a marvellous portrait of his sister in a patterned dress, her hieratic stillness and steady gaze hinting at much emotion under the calm (*Portrait of Inger, the Artist's Sister*, 1892).

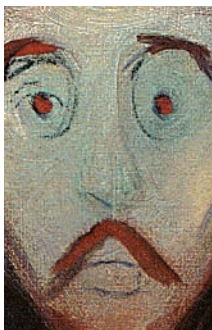
Ibsen in the Grand Café

1898

Oil on canvas, 72 x 100 cm

Courtesy Galleri K, Oslo





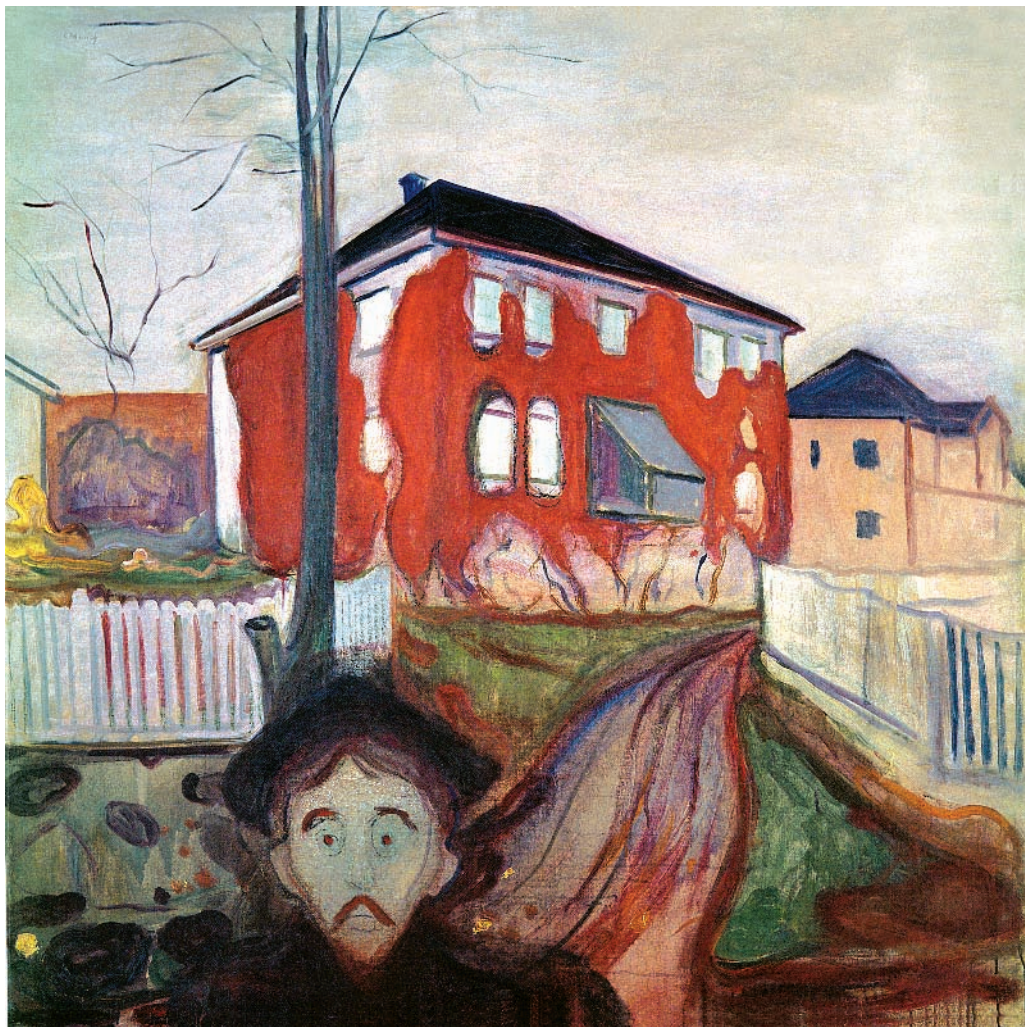
An astonishing attack by a right-wing critic in Norway at this point railed against Munch's 'degeneracy' and protested against his receipt of state funds. The intemperate language used would not be out of place among the Nazis and their campaign against 'Degenerate Art' in the 1930s. But the artist's friends continued to support him and his celebration of the

Red Virginia Creeper

1898-1900

Oil on canvas, 119.5 x 121 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





irrational and symbolist, which was perceived as a threat to bourgeois rationality and materialism. The group of Berlin bohemian friends often met to drink at a tavern called the Black Pig, and it was from these meetings that the idea for the Secession developed. Munch's close friend Przybyszewski was married to a Norwegian girl, Dagny Juel, known as Ducha, whose

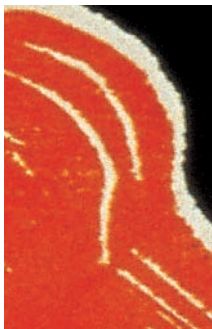
The Dance of Life

1899-1900

Oil on canvas, 125 x 191 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





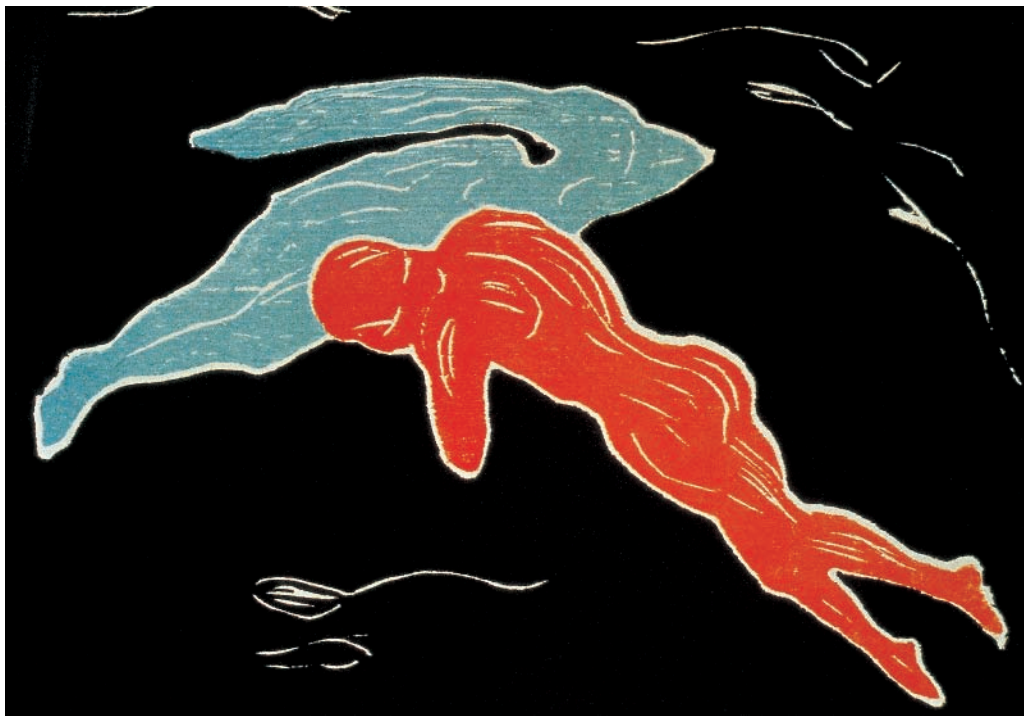
seductive slenderness and somewhat feverish animal magnetism had a powerful effect on Munch, as on most of the men she knew (*Dagny Juel Przybyszewska*, 1893). Her entry into the group caused it to fragment after a while: jealousy reared its head yet again, and the intellectually pleasing interchange of ideas was threatened with the demon of sexuality. Like most of their circle, both she and Munch had a seemingly

Encounter in Space

1899

Coloured lithograph, 18 x 25 cm

Private collection





limitless capacity for absinthe, the 'Green Fairy', whose poisonous effects apparently did neither of them much harm at the time. There is something of her, as of Milly, in the *Madonna* pictures. Dagny was to come to a premature and dramatic end when she was shot in 1901 in the Georgian capital of Tiflis (Tbilisi) by a deranged young Russian lover, who believed he was fulfilling her husband's wishes.

Two Human Beings. The Lonely Ones

1899

Woodcut

Epstein Family Collection, Washington D.C.





His belief in the recycling of all matter, a constant circulation of the life force from a corpse to a plant or tree that feeds new human life in a kind of eternity, lay behind the many paintings on the theme of death that Munch produced for his next exhibition, for the Berlin Secessionists, in 1893. Among these is *The Dead Mother*, which expresses the idea that the body decomposes and its substance is returned to nature to

Melancholy (Laura)

1899

Oil on canvas, 110 x 126 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





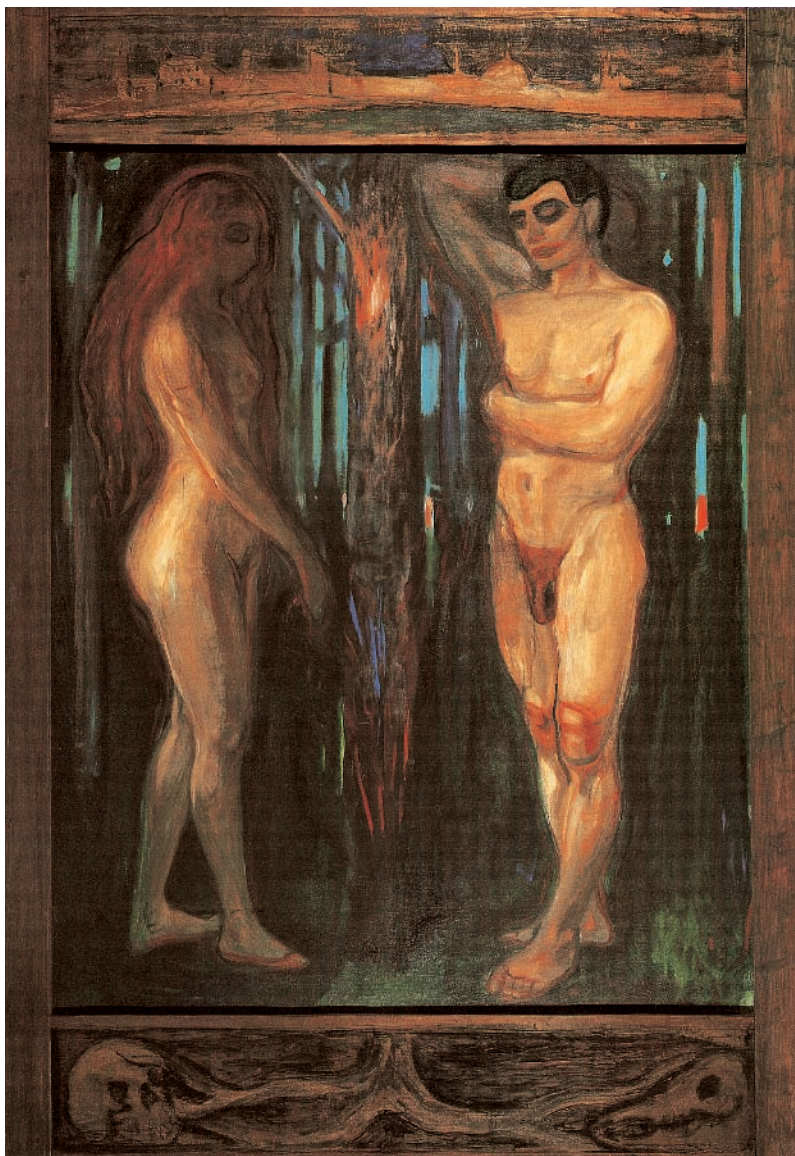
nourish future generations, plants, or soil. He even went so far as to sketch a corpse with the gases of decomposition issuing from it. Death was of course a preoccupation of Böcklin, the German painter he most admired. A masterpiece of this period is *Death in the Sick-Room* (1893–1894), which is a group portrait of his entire family: he and his two sisters in the foreground, his brother, father, and aunt at the back.

Metabolism

1899

Oil on canvas, 172.5 x 142 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





The figure that is dying presumably refers to the eldest child, Sophie, but these people are shown as they were in 1893, not as they looked at the time of Sophie's death sixteen years earlier.

Dr Munch, it should be remembered, was dead by this time, but the artist shows him as he would have been. The painting, which was executed in casein, a medium new to Munch, was warmly received and was the true beginning of his acceptance as an artist worth

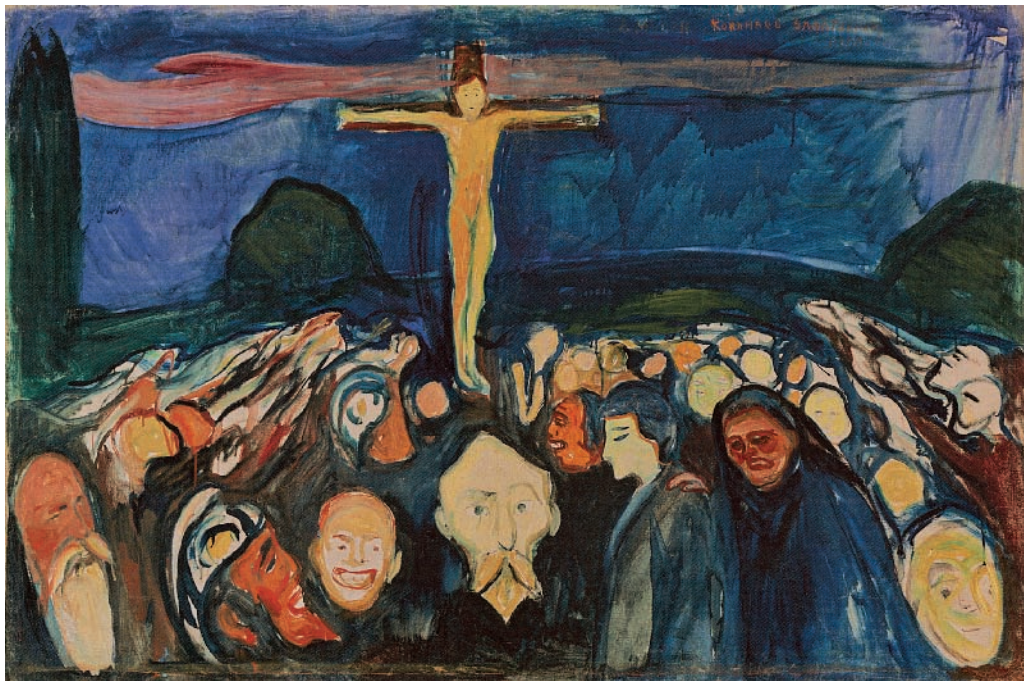


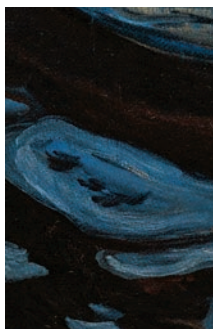
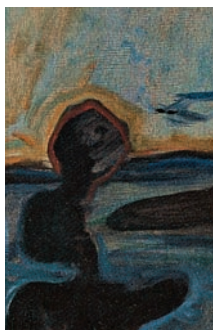
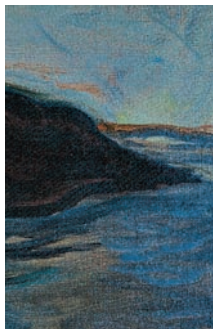
Golgotha

1900

Oil on canvas, 80 x 120 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





taking seriously. He began a period of strenuous activity during which he painted *Separation* (1894), a graphic depiction of the moment when a woman tells her lover that she no longer wants him. He lived fairly happily in Berlin, seeing a great deal of Przybyszewski and Dagny (*Portrait of Stanisław Przybyszewski*, c. 1893) and creating numerous outstanding paintings and graphic works. But his supply of funds was drying up,

The Island

1900-1901

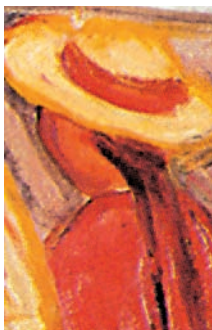
Oil on canvas, 99 x 108 cm

Private collection, Oslo





and only the kindness of a German patron kept him going. He was also frequently ill. The *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* of 1895 clearly delineates the bohemian excesses of this period. The smoke from his cigarette drifts up past a pale, staring face which looms at us out of the shadows. The unfinished quality only adds to the drama. He was by this time thirty-two years old. He felt a strong desire to add to his great *Love* or



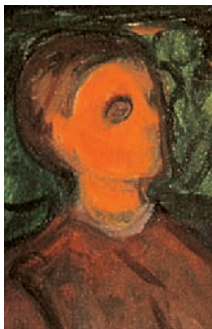
Girls on the Pier

c. 1901

Oil on canvas, 136 x 125.5 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





Frieze of Life series, creating a kind of narrative for the paintings in his 'diaries'. He also decided to arrange his 'Death' paintings in a sequence. The triple aspect of woman appears in *Symbolic Study*, a gouache of 1893: framing the central portion are the innocent girl, her flesh yellowish in tone, the woman in the full flush of motherhood and fecundity, coloured green, and, lying across the top, woman in her sexual aspect,



Fertility II

1902

Oil on canvas, 128 x 152 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





coloured purplish-red; in the centre are three female heads oppressing a man, who is resting on the dead body of another woman below.

This painting sums up all that Munch was trying to say about love and life in his series. The combination of several themes into one picture was something that he was to revert to frequently over the next few years.

Munch was not only a painter; in the course of his life he mastered every aspect of graphic art, beginning

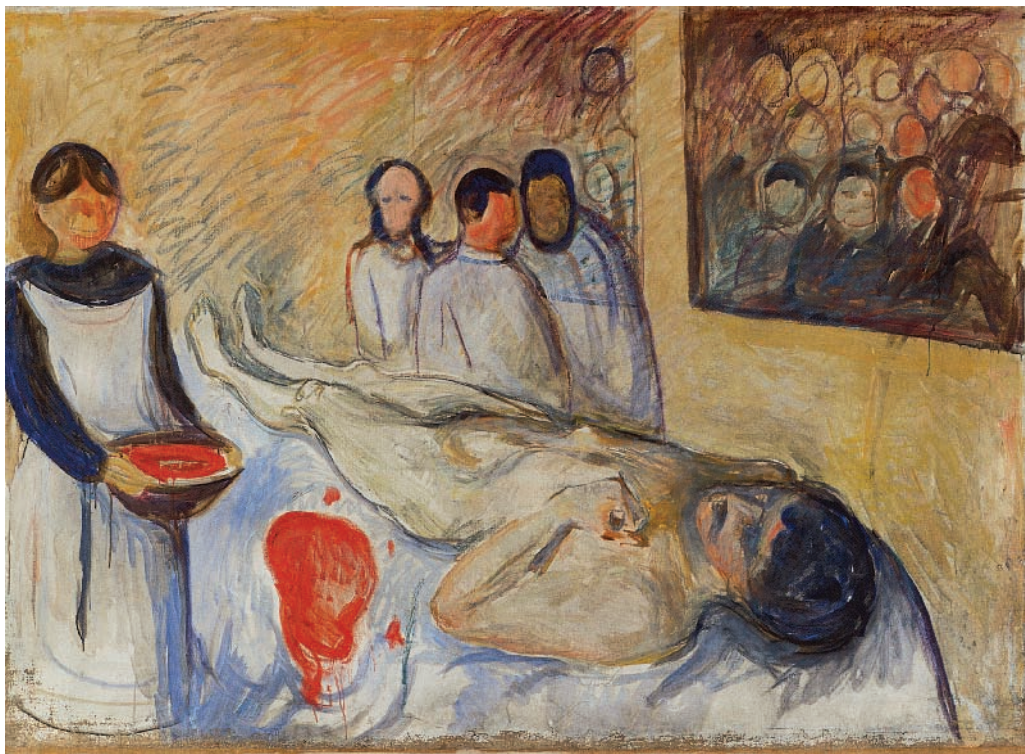


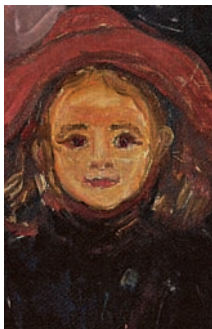
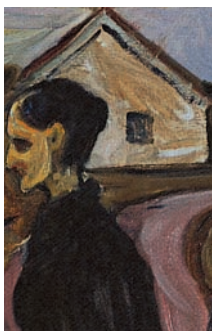
On the Operating Table

1902-1903

Oil on canvas, 109 x 149 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





in Berlin when he was thirty-one. The initial impetus to learn print-making was the pressing need to earn money. His German patron, Baron von Bodenhause, suggested to him that this was the way forward, both in terms of earnings and of expanding his basis for collectors. He started with engraving and moved on to lithographs; but, in the beginning at least, his hope of success was not fulfilled, in spite of being fortunate

Four Ages in Life

1902

Oil on canvas, 130.4 x 100.4 cm

Rasmus Meyers Collection, Bergen Art Museum, Bergen





enough to secure the patronage of Count Kessler, an influential collector. His colour lithographs are particularly successful, their blocks of pure colour bringing a new, sharper expression to the emotions explored in the paintings on which they were based. His woodcuts, too, a form that he first encountered in Paris, were marvellously succinct expressions of an emotional moment – nothing could be more redolent of its

The Sin (Nude with Red Hair and Green Eyes)

1902

Coloured lithography, 49.5 x 39.9 cm
 Berliner Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin





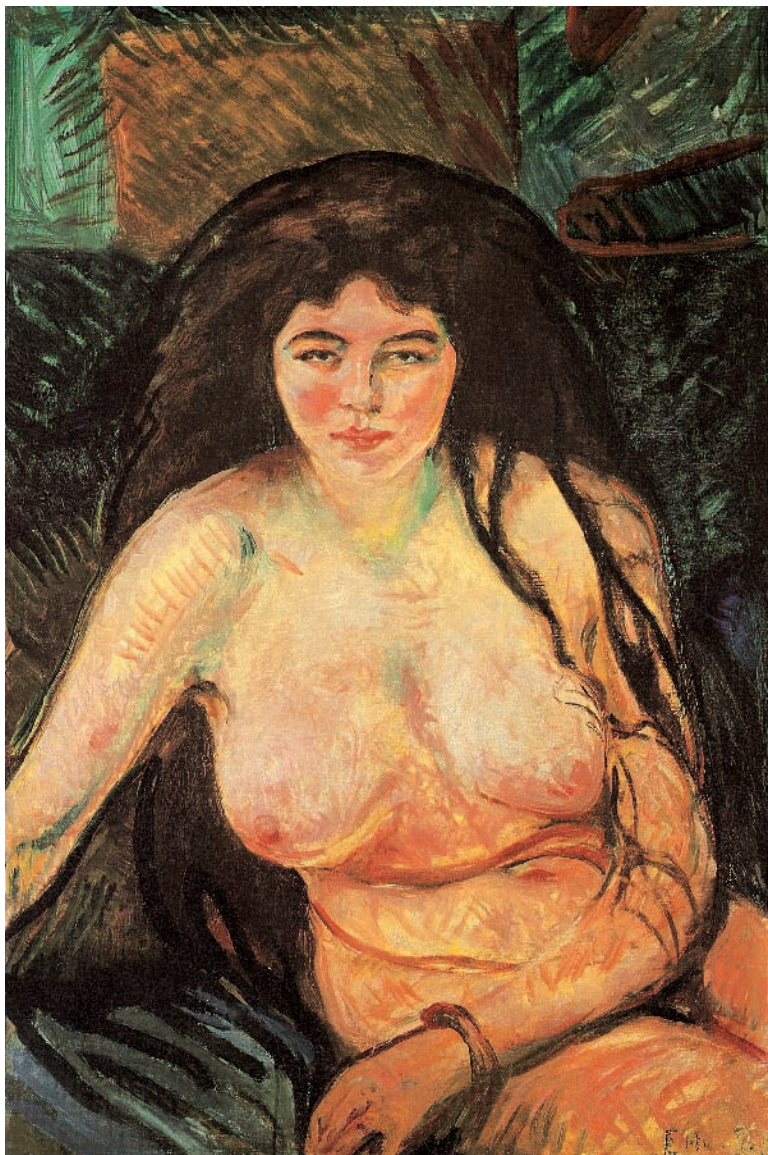
eponymous emotion than *Melancholy* (1896). The extraordinary *On Man's Mind* (1898) uses the simplest of woodcut techniques to produce a compelling, sinuous pattern expressing the oppression of man by woman.

Although women found him very attractive, Munch's relationships with them were never satisfactory. Let us remember, first, that the death of his mother when he was at so tender an age was a kind

The Beast

1902

Oil on canvas, 94.5 x 63.5 cm
Sprengel Museum, Hanover





of rejection – if he loved a woman he felt she would go away from him, leaving him despairing and longing; secondly, that he was a product of his time, experiencing the distrust of women that was triggered by the growth of female emancipation, the fear of powerful women that frequently turned to hatred. His affairs with Milly Thaulow and later with Tulla Larsen probably bear some responsibility for this. Many of his

The Four Sons of Dr Max Linde

1903

Oil on canvas, 144 x 199.5 cm

Die Museen für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte
der Hansestadt Lübeck, Lübeck





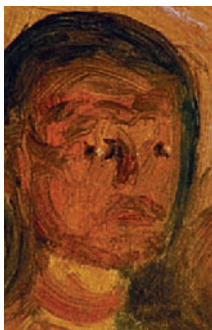
generation exhibited this fear and distrust: Strindberg, in particular, who wrote that women's nature was 'crooked and warped and inclined to evil' (his misogyny fuelled by his tortured feelings for Dagny); the dramatist Frank Wedekind (creator of the anti-heroine Lulu); that ambivalent celebrant of loucheness, the poet Charles Baudelaire; and the Belgian painter Félicien Rops with his savage depictions of the feminine principle.

The Brooch: Eva Mudocci

1903

Lithograph on thin Japan paper, 60.8 x 47 cm
The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago





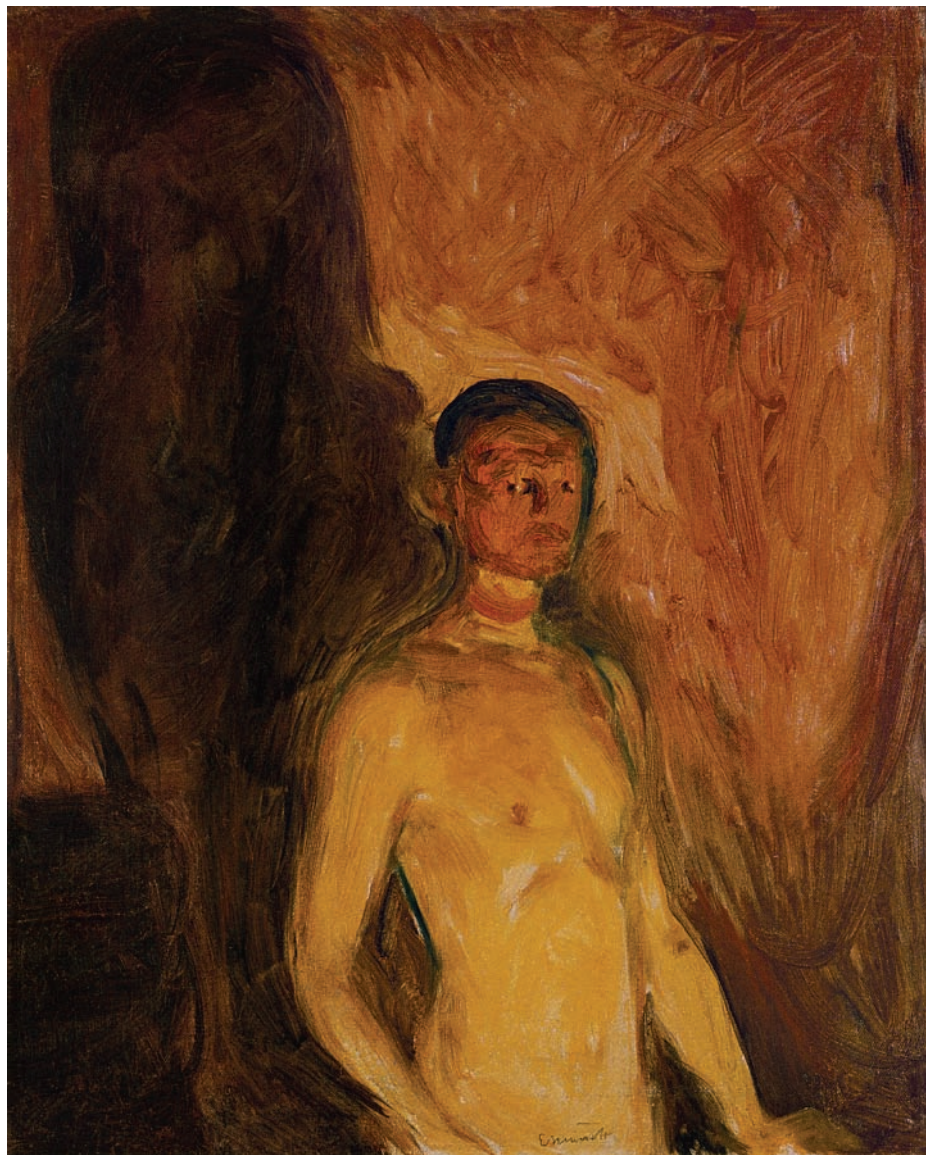
But at the same time Munch was able to recognise that women were perfectly capable of love and self-sacrifice. His ambiguous attitude is summed up in another version of womankind's threefold nature, *The Three Stages of Woman* (1894): the virgin, the whore, and the crone are here present, though in more subtle guise than these archetypes. The three stages reappear,

Self-Portrait in Hell

1903

Oil on canvas, 82 x 66 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





with the whore transmogrified into the mother, in *The Dance of Life* (1900). Returning to Norway in 1895, he experienced the, by now, customary unfavourable reaction to his latest exhibition – he was even labelled as bearing the curse of hereditary insanity, a viewpoint with which he might have concurred.

Unable to cope with the strictures of his own countrymen, and sorrowing at the death of his brother



Roulette Table

1903

Oil on canvas

Munch Museum, Oslo





Andreas, he moved on to Paris. There ten pictures in the *Frieze of Life* series were shown at the Salon des Indépendants and at Samuel Bing's Art Nouveau gallery. Most summers he returned to his little house in Norway, at Åsgårdstrand, which he loved. From 1892 until 1908 he spent a great deal of time in Germany, practically adopting it as his country. The Berlin Secessionists' more conventional members were

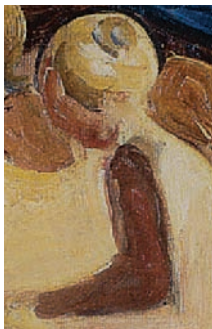
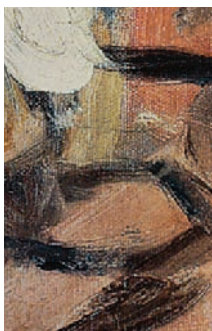
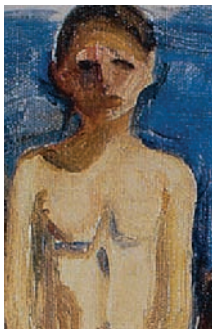
Self-Portrait with Brushes

1904

Oil on canvas, 197 x 91.5 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





suspicious of him, and he did not have another exhibition with the group until 1902 – which, however, was a success, gaining him the esteem of the influential dealer Paul Cassirer. It was gained at some cost. His relationship with the beautiful and determined Tulla Larsen commenced in 1898; she was to cause him, in her own way, even more trouble and nervous exhaustion than Milly Thaulow had earlier. Tulla was

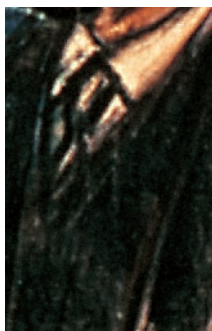
Bathing Boys

1904-1905

Oil on canvas, 57.4 x 68.5 cm

Private collection





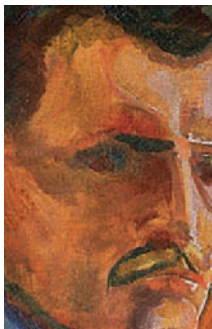
single-minded in her pursuit of the artist. Wealthy, a few years his junior (he was now thirty-five) and sexually predatory, Tulla chased him relentlessly, spreading the rumour that they were to be married, never leaving him alone, following him from place to place and even from country to country. In his mind she epitomised the three feminine archetypes, the radiantly happy spring maiden, the sorrowing mother, and the

Nietzsche I

1906

Oil on canvas, 201 x 160 cm
Thielska Gallery, Stockholm





‘flame-haired temptress’ (*The Dance of Life*). Her red hair was a major element in Munch’s attraction to her, and later in the disgust and desperation he felt on thinking about her. But he was certain in his mind that he must resist any sexual involvement with her in case his artistic impulse was compromised. Not unnaturally, she disagreed vehemently with this point of view, and the conflict became impossible for him to handle. His



Self-Portrait with Bottle of Wine

1906

Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 120.5 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





anxious mood is expressed in *Red Virginia Creeper* (1898-1900), in which the face in the foreground appears to be fleeing from some nameless horror in the house behind. The painting is suffused with red, a colour now reflecting not only Tulla's hair but the angst and confrontation associated with her. The affair continued on and off for several years, during which Munch grew closer and closer to a total breakdown.



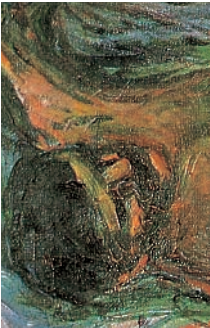
The Murderer

1906

Oil on canvas, 110 x 120 cm
Munch Museum, Oslo







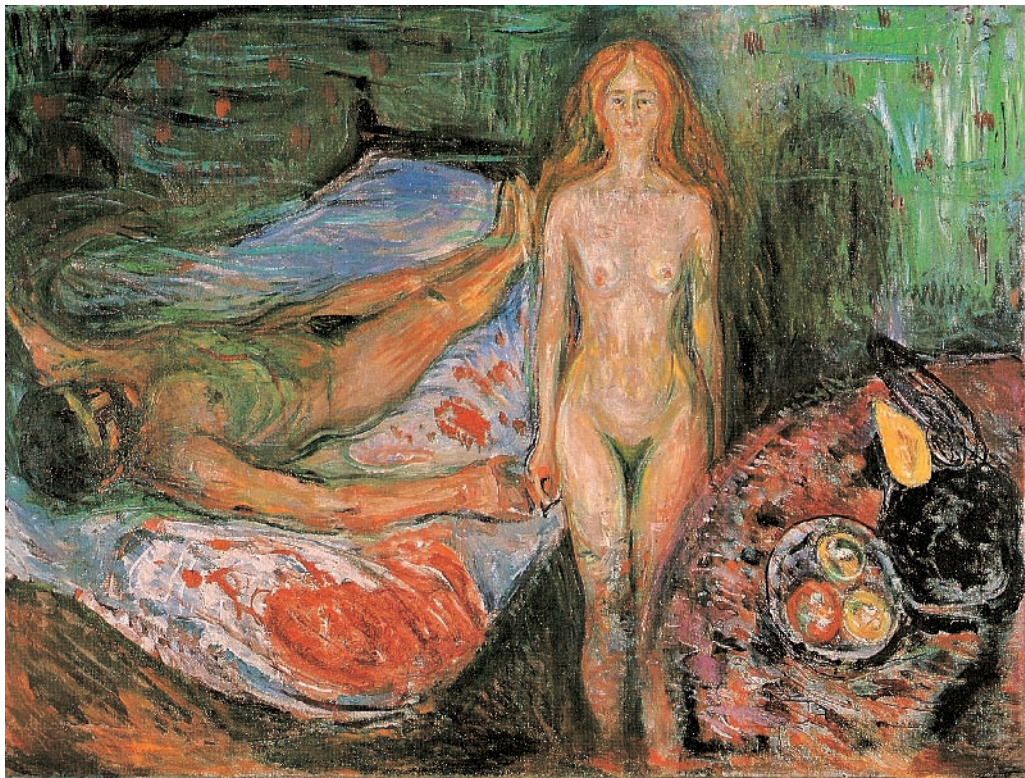
He found himself unable to work for a year or so, and retreated to the peace of a sanatorium for several months late in 1899. He moved on to Berlin, hoping for calm and stability; there, ironically, his reputation was growing, and his financial circumstances took a turn for the better, thanks to the patronage of Albert Kollmann. He returned to creative form only in 1901, when he was able to field over seventy paintings for

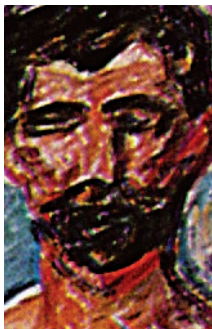
The Death of Marat I

1907

Oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm

Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo





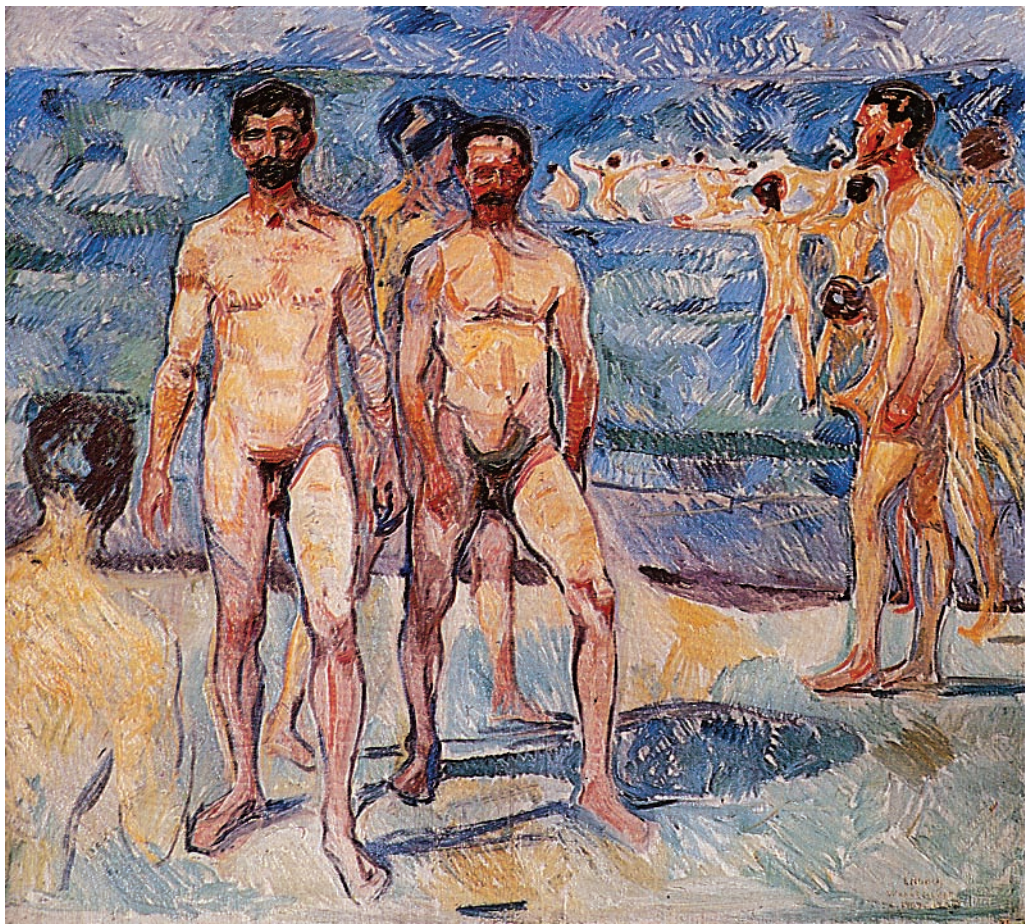
an exhibition. Under Kollmann's aegis, Munch now joined the Berlin Secessionists who had made so pointed a move from traditional values in 1892. He enlarged and more or less completed the *Frieze of Life*, exhibiting the series at the Secession gallery in 1902. Critical acclaim was now his – he was seen as an artist of the future, in defiance of the earlier criticism that people had already seen everything he



Bathing Men

1907

Oil on canvas, 206 x 277.5 cm
Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki





had to offer. By 1902 he was at the end of his tether with his stormy affair. Tulla, unable to give up in spite of his many attempts to escape her, lured him to her side by a subterfuge, threatening suicide if he did not come.

In the course of a disastrous sequence of events, a gun was fired; the shot badly, and permanently, damaged Munch's left hand. It is not clear who fired the gun, though it was an accident. While Munch was



Walter Rathenau

1907

Oil on canvas, 220 x 110 cm

Rasmus Meyers Collection, Bergen





in hospital, Tulla fled. They were never to meet again. Munch sought refuge with a doctor friend in Lübeck, and there, for a time, found some kind of healing. He repaid the kindness with a series of paintings and engravings of the doctor's family and environs; one of the finest is the group portrait of *The Four Sons of Dr Linde* (1903). His last encounter with Tulla was depicted in *The Death of Marat* (1905-1908), one of

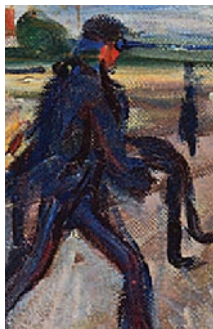
Worker and Child

1908

Oil on canvas, 76 x 90 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





the many works he produced in this period in which she is seen as a murderess – either literally or as the slayer of his peace of mind. She did not let go, spreading malicious rumours about how he had lived off her wealth; she was somehow able to get his former friends, such as Krohg and Heiberg, to take her side, which made Paris very uncomfortable for him when he arrived there in 1903, only to hear, to his

The Drowned Boy. Warnemünde

1908

Oil on canvas, 85.5 x 130.5 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





horror, that she was there, now married to a painter. Some good came out of this Paris visit, however, Munch made a new friend in the shape of Eva Mudocci, a violinist whose beautiful eyes and luxuriant dark hair provided inspiration for a further series of lithographs (*The Lady with the Brooch*, 1903). Eva was unthreatening and tenderly affectionate, and this platonic friendship gave him some much-needed

Dr Daniel Jacobson

1909

Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 120.5 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





respite from turmoil. There now began a period of extensive travel, as he fled from the destructive effects of Tulla's passion. Feverish work resulted in numerous exhibitions throughout Europe and the United States – no fewer than sixteen in Berlin alone over the next few years. He was often very ill, in the grip of alcoholism, and suffering greatly from emotional stress. His *Self-Portrait with Brushes* (1904) shows a man in control



Self-Portrait in Dr Jacobson's Clinic

1909

Oil on canvas, 100 x 110 cm

Private collection, Bergen





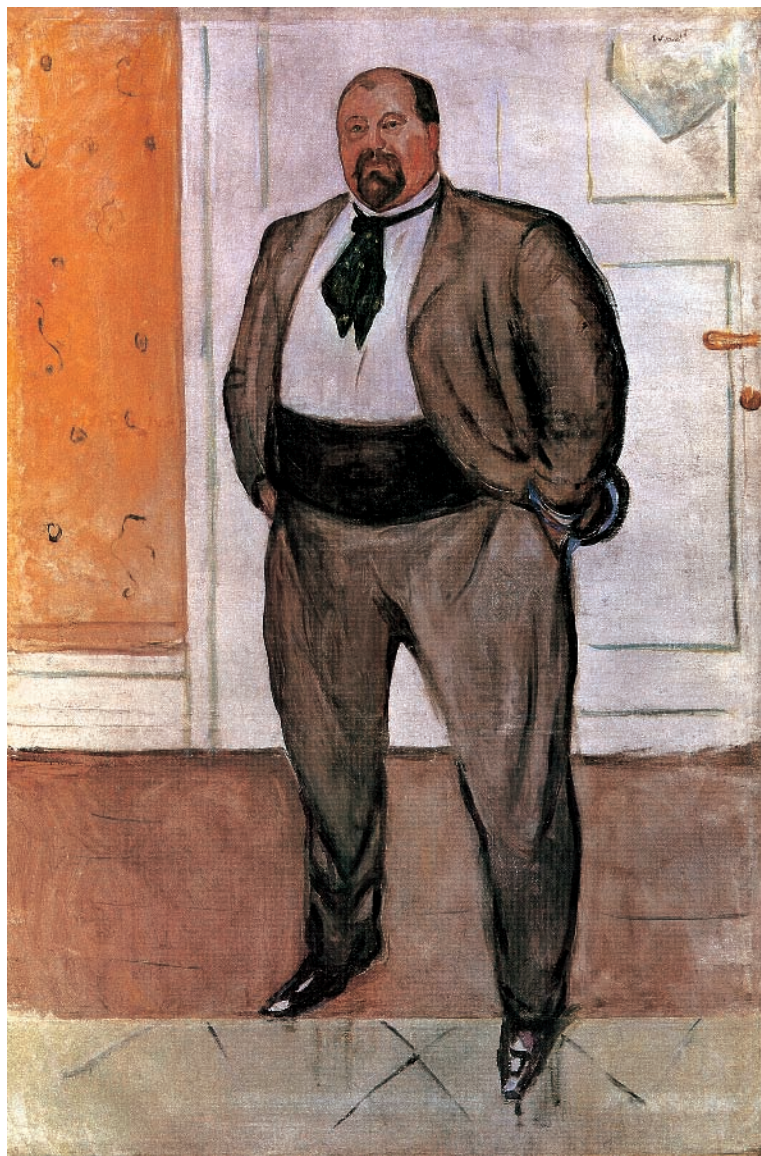
of himself, this is illusory, since by now he was subject to hallucinations and irrational outbursts of anger that put him in physical danger from others' reactions. Despite this fragile state, Munch the artist was now reaping the rewards of his years of work and striving. He found himself revered as the guiding light of the Expressionist group known as *Die Brücke*, who banded together in Dresden in 1905 and sought to follow where he led.

Christen Sandberg

1909

Oil on canvas, 215 x 147 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





He was seen as encompassing the best of the German spirit in art, 'German' here having the wider sense of 'Nordic' or 'Germanic', and the influential strata of German society, embracing the Nietzschean concept of purity through struggle, took him to their hearts.

A return to Åsgårdstrand did not allow him any time for recuperation, since the political situation was becoming volatile. The union of Norway and Sweden

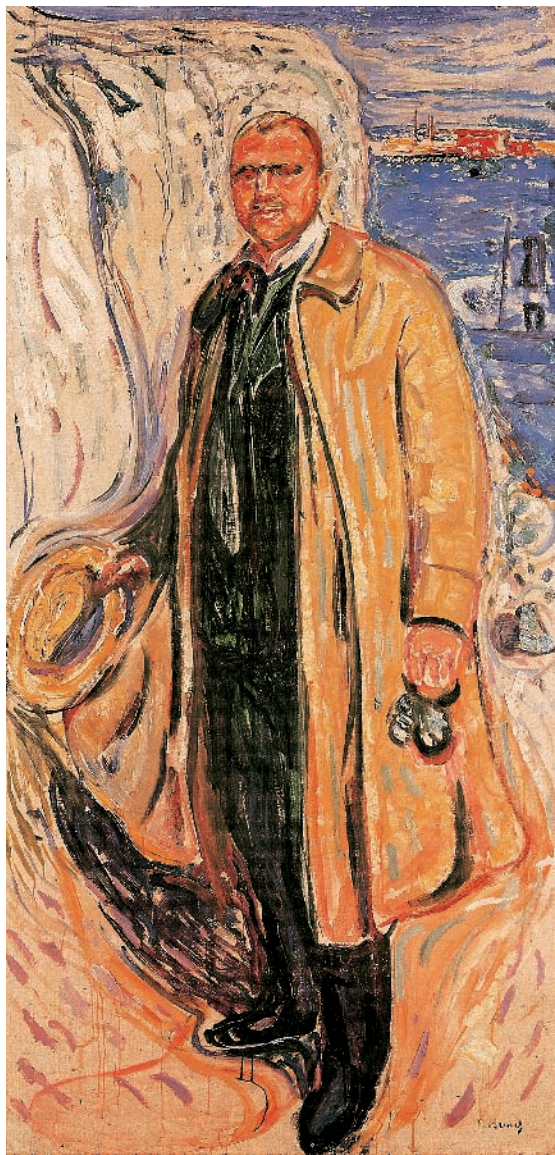


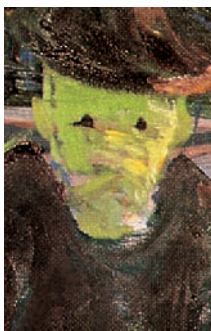
Christian Gierloff

1910

Oil on canvas, 205 x 98 cm

The Gothenburg Art Museum, Gothenborg





was dissolved in 1905, and war seemed likely. He went to Copenhagen, and then back to Germany where he took the cure at various spas and tried to control his drinking. In 1908, while setting up an exhibition in Copenhagen, total mental and physical exhaustion overwhelmed him, and a crisis, during which he heard voices and suffered persecutory delusions, caused him to be admitted to a psychiatric

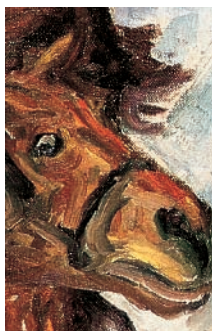
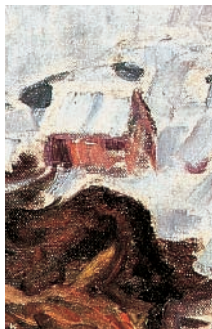
The Murderer

1910

Oil on canvas, 94.5 x 154 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





clinic, where he remained for several months. This was a turning-point. The extensive period of treatment and rehabilitation was remarkably successful, and the artist emerged with new vigour and an altogether more positive outlook. He also gave up drinking – he is said never to have drunk alcohol again. The doctor chiefly responsible for this happy outcome was immortalised in a fine portrait (*Dr Daniel Jacobsen*, 1909),

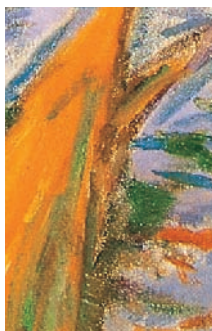
The Galloping Horse

1910-1912

Oil on canvas, 148 x 120 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





his somewhat austere features enlivened by the warm reds and yellows of the background and the rich brown of his clothes. A poet friend of the doctor was also painted in the same year, in an equally fine portrayal (*Helge Rode, 1909*). A contributory factor in Munch's revival was surely his recognition by the state with his appointment as a Knight of the Royal Norwegian Order of St Olav.

The Yellow Log

1912

Oil on canvas, 129 x 160.5 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





With his recovery came a determination to stop the endless, restless travelling and settle permanently in Norway. He bought a farm at Ramme on the Oslo fjord, and also rented two other estates – Skrubben and Grunsrød. He visited these three in rotation, finding peace in the variety of landscape and closeness to the natural world. He led a simple life, saw few people outside those who worked on his

Alma Mater

1911-1916

Mural, 450 x 1160 cm

Festival Hall of Oslo University, Oslo





estates, and drew fresh inspiration from the day-to-day life around him (*Workers in the Snow*, 1912). This period of breakdown and recovery was, hardly surprisingly, pivotal in Munch's art. Afterwards his work took on a sunnier, more relaxed tone. The anguish and sorrow of his earlier oeuvre did not vanish altogether – just as the artist himself did not become, overnight as it were, cured of his depression

History

1911-1916

Mural, 450 x 1160 m

Festival Hall of Oslo University, Oslo



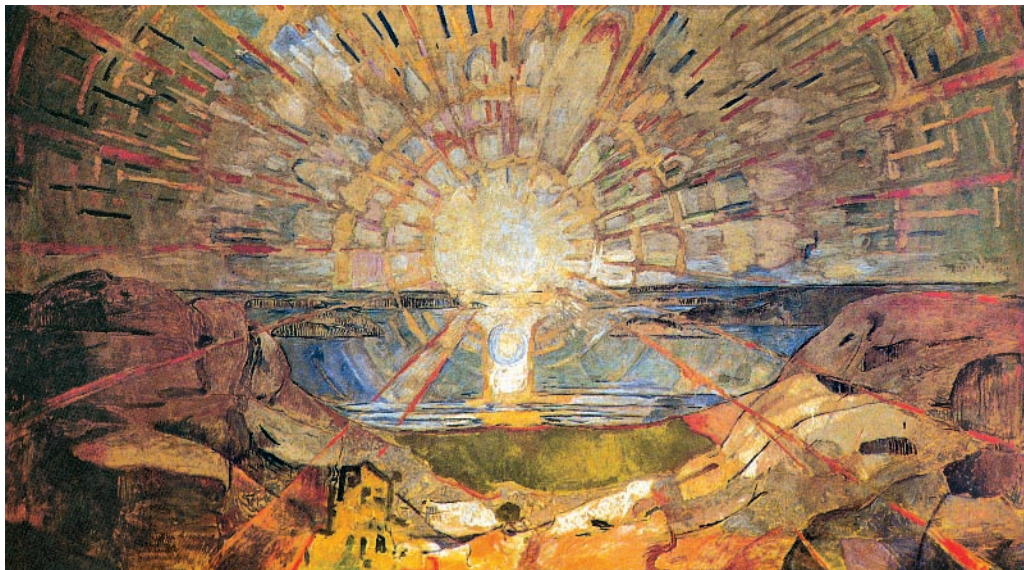


and the trauma of his youthful years – but the sadder aspects retreated and a new mood of optimism was now discernible. During his illness and recuperation, Munch managed to maintain his artistic activities, arranging exhibitions and painting the staff in the clinic. Indeed, continuing to work was therapy for him – in front of the easel he was in command of the people he depicted, rather than the reverse.

The Sun

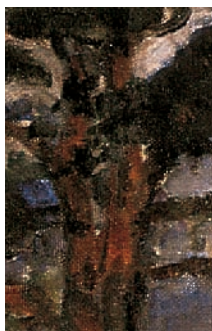
1911-1916

Mural, 66 x 25.4 x 490 cm
Festival Hall of Oslo University, Oslo





As recovery progressed, he made some momentous decisions. He now felt able to dismantle the *Frieze of Life* cycle, and sold various works from it. It was a way of putting the past behind him. His new optimism is given expression in the 1909 *Self-Portrait in Copenhagen*, which shows a revitalised figure, matured in the fires of suffering and now ready for a new phase in his life. One of the most important



Winter in Kragero

1912

Oil on canvas, 131.5 x 131 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





projects of this period was the commission to decorate the new Great Hall of Christiania University. The University's centenary was celebrated in 1911, and leading Scandinavian artists were invited to enter the competition to produce murals for the new building. Munch, one of several painters who put in a successful application, started work in the spring of 1909, just at the point where he emerged from his illness revived.

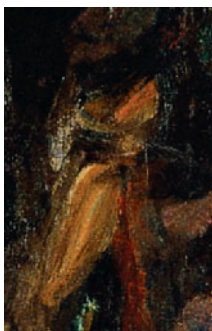
Reclining Nude

1912-1913

Oil on canvas

Kunsthalle, Hamburg





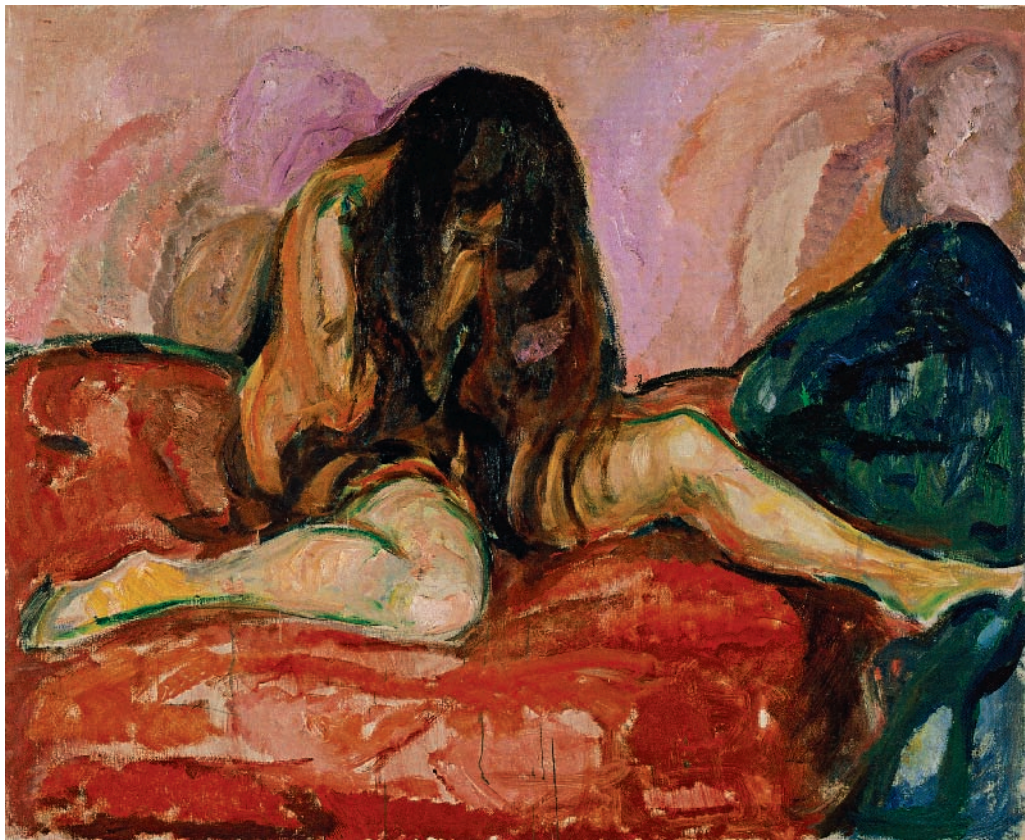
Three enormous oil panels were designed, with smaller ones as decorative adjuncts. The one on the left, entitled *History*, is a colossal work over 38 feet (11.5 metres) wide and nearly 15 feet (4.5 metres) high. It depicts a child standing before an elderly man, who is passing on his learning under the benevolent shade of an enormous oak. The branches of the massive tree stretch out over the pair as if imbuing its ancient

Weeping Nude

1913

Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 135 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





knowledge to the boy – a kind of passage of wisdom from revered elder to callow youth.

One commentator said the painting expressed 'the living process of transmission'. The central panel took as its theme the rising sun, the giver of all life. The longing for the sun was a theme that Munch returned to in his writings as well as his art. In a part of the world where the sun is more or less absent from daily



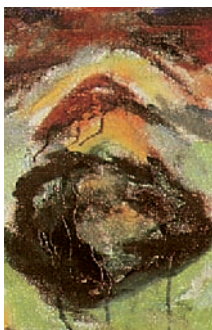
Workers in the Snow

c. 1913

Oil on canvas, 163 x 200 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





life for almost half the year, its reappearance in spring and its life-giving radiance throughout the summer months were celebrated not just by painters. Naturism and sun-worship were becoming widely accepted in Northern Europe, as was a romantic view of pre-industrial life on the land, in tune with nature. In this huge oil painting the sun rises out of the sea, throwing its light over the fjords, hills, and valleys all around. The rays are painted in a geometric fashion,

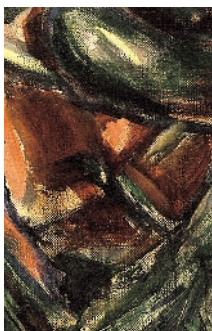
By the Death Bed (Fever)

c. 1915

Oil on canvas, 187 x 234 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





the concentric circles made up of rectangles, with streaks and dashes of colour from all shades of the spectrum. A few minuscule figures look up in wonder at the celestial show. The third main panel is entitled *Alma Mater*, and celebrates the benign female principle. The placid earth-mother nursing her baby is surrounded by other young children in a fresh, summery landscape. Again the sea provides an important element of the composition.

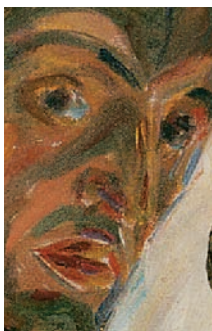
Workers Returning Home

1915

Oil on canvas, 201 x 227 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





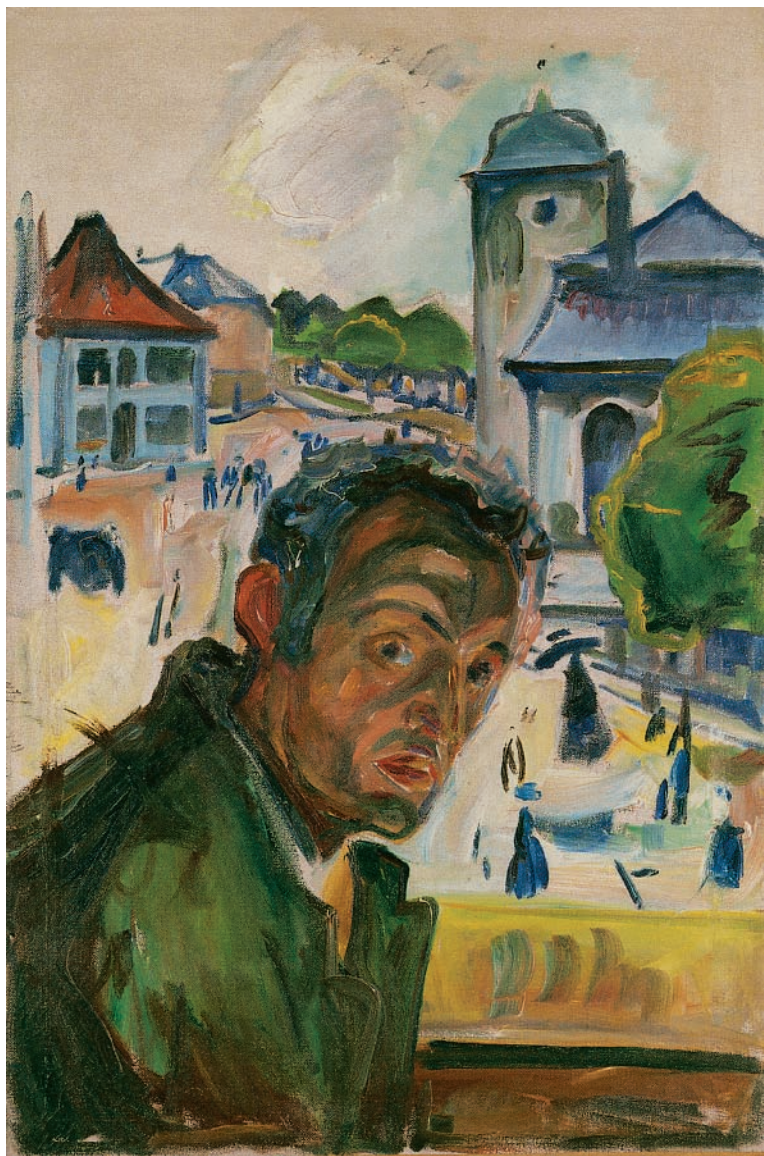
The painting contrasts the ripe fruitfulness of the young mother with the interaction of extreme age and youth in *History*. All three panels, with their smaller framing subjects, are intended to express the whole of human life in a spirit that is both particularly Norwegian and also universally recognised. We have already noticed how Munch could be termed the forerunner or prime mover of Expressionism through

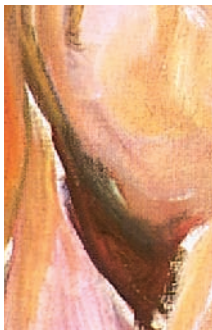
Self-Portrait in Bergen

1916

Oil on canvas, 89.5 x 60 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





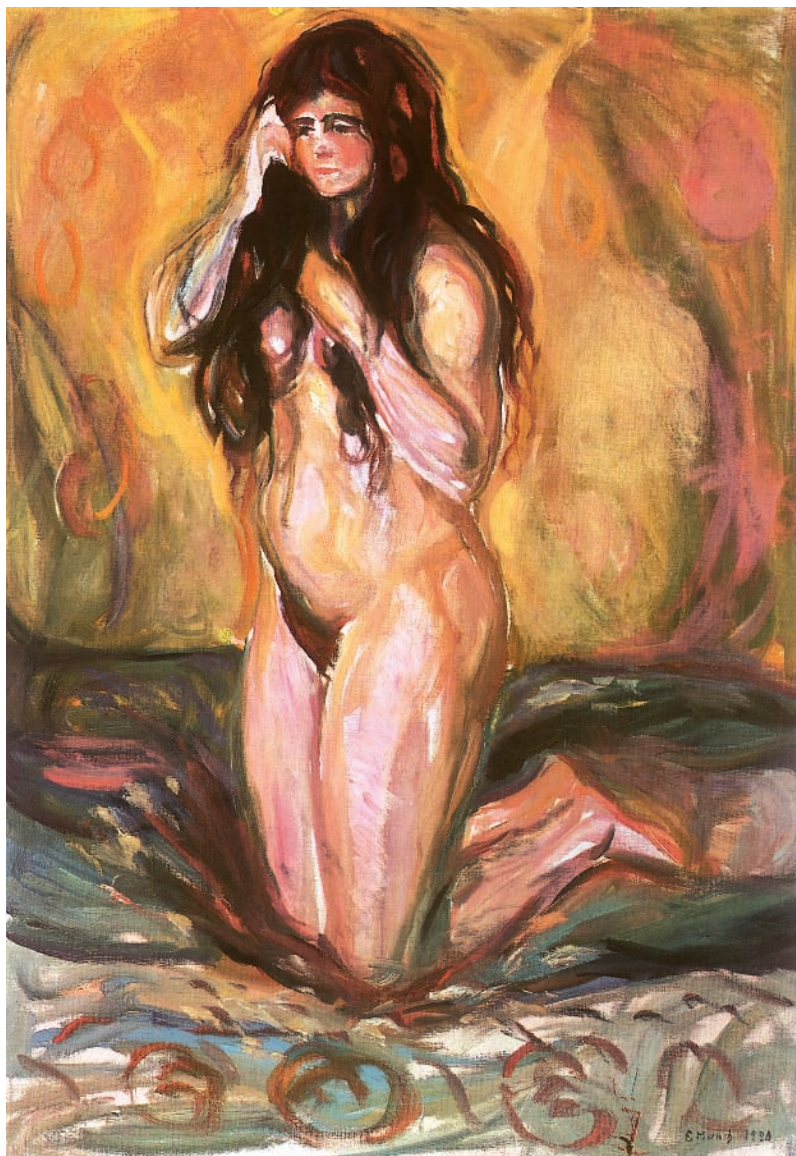
his apotheosis by the Brücke group of artists. The next move in this process was the invitation to exhibit in 1912 with the Sonderbund artistic group, based in Düsseldorf. Their work was already being termed Expressionism, a way of describing the subjectivism of the artist and the attempt to elicit an intuitive response in the viewer by means of intense colour, monumental forms, and simple, strong lines. Munch was in interesting

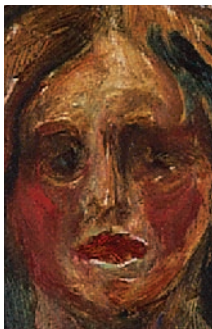
Kneeling Female Nude (Anna)

1920

Oil on canvas, 150 x 106 cm

Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston





company: fellow artists held to be inspirational for the movement were Van Gogh (above all), James Ensor, and Ferdinand Hodler. A major exhibition was mounted in Cologne, with artists from all over Europe participating.

When Munch saw it he wrote, 'Here is collected the wildest of what is being painted in Europe. I am actually classical and pale in contrast. The cathedral

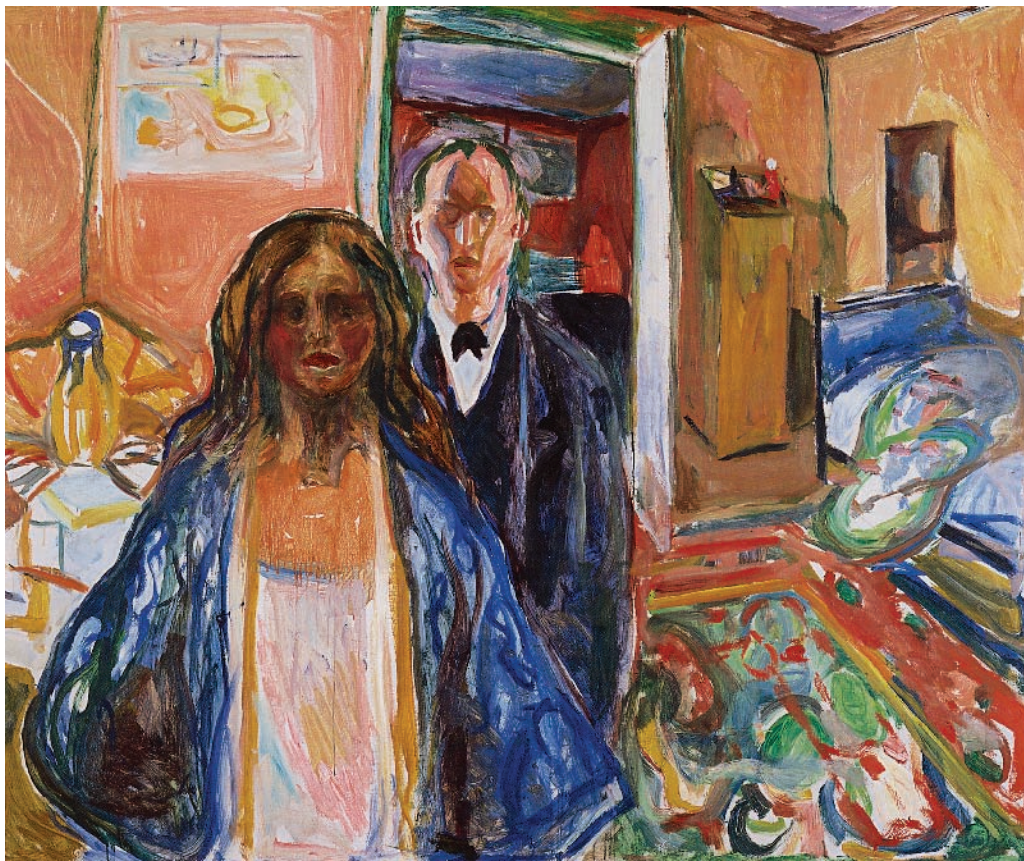


The Artist and His Model I

1919-1921

Oil on canvas, 128 x 153 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





of Cologne is trembling in its foundations.¹⁶ The Germanic awakening that Munch helped foster was a primary element of the Expressionist movement. The heirs of the first phase, Emil Nolde, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Oskar Kokoschka, and to some extent Egon Schiele, turning their backs on the creative ferment of Paris, focused on Vienna, where Freud's psychoanalytical theories chimed perfectly with their subjective

Model by the Wicker Chair

1919-1921

Oil on canvas, 122.5 x 100 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





introspection. The natural progression of the movement led to a kind of violent realism which eventually found itself in confrontation with Nazi ideals of artistic worth. Expressionism developed in many forms and with many subdivisions, in Belgium and the Netherlands, the USA, Latin America, France, Spain, and Italy. Picasso's *Guernica* is the ultimate vision of Expressionist violence. After World War II the American

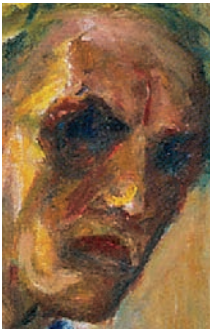
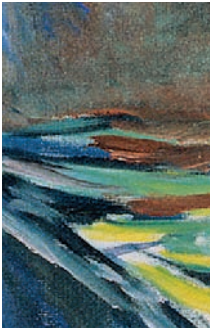
Self-Portrait after the Spanish Flu

1919

Oil on canvas, 150.5 x 131 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





exponents of Abstract Expressionism included Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, Clyfford Still, and Robert Motherwell. The line connecting Munch to the great American painters of the 1950s, therefore, while not exactly a straight one, is a discernible thread that associates these iconic masters with the tortured Nordic genius: what links them is 'the will to express

Self-Portrait. The Night-Wanderer

1923-1924

Oil on canvas, 90 x 68 cm

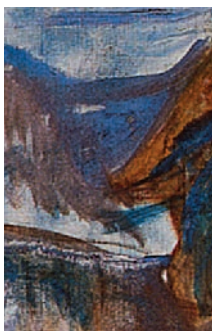
Munch Museum, Oslo





the inner world of man, composed of dramatic impulses, violence, and questions without answers'.⁷ The Expressionists, unhappy at their evaluation by the Berlin public and critics, seceded yet again in 1913.

Munch was asked to exhibit with them to mark his fiftieth birthday; the show was a triumph. Even his Norwegian critics conceded defeat, and his work was enthusiastically bought, reviewed, and celebrated in

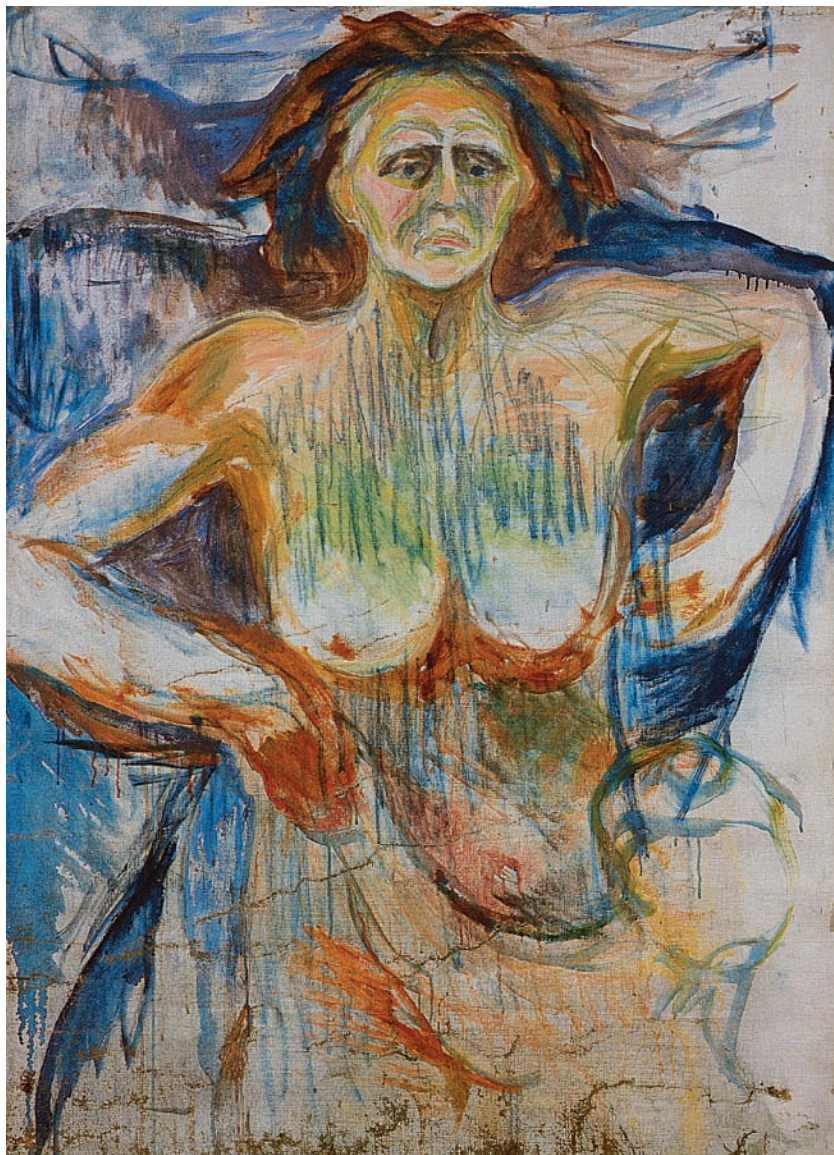


Androgynous Self-Portrait

1927

Oil on canvas, 149 x 103 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





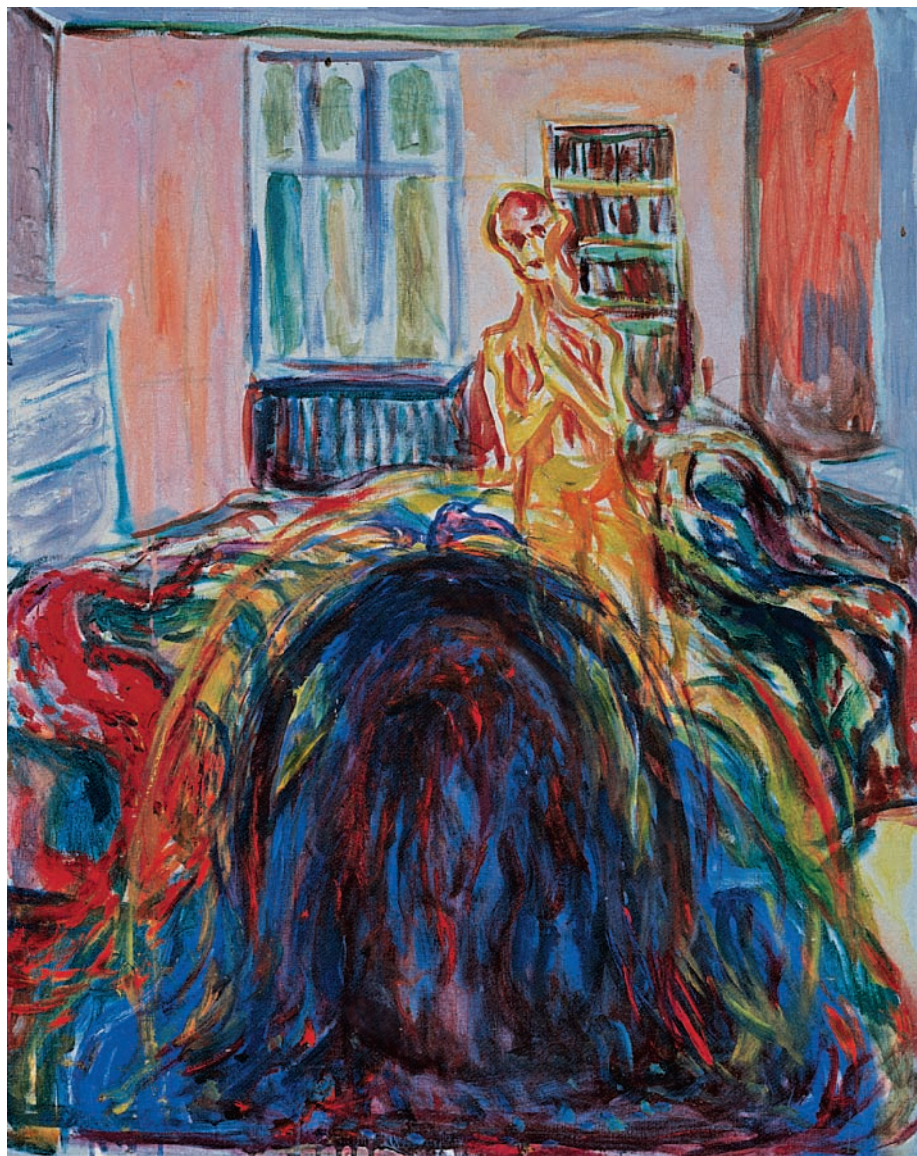
books and newspapers. The Great War was difficult for Munch to come to terms with. His natural inclination was to side with Germany, his spiritual home and quasi-adoptive country. But he could not maintain this support in the face of the millions of needless deaths reported, and he retreated into isolation. His work became somewhat repetitive as he sought to make sense of what he had produced so far. At Ekely, the estate

Self-Portrait During the Eye Disease I

1930

Oil on canvas, 80 x 64 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo



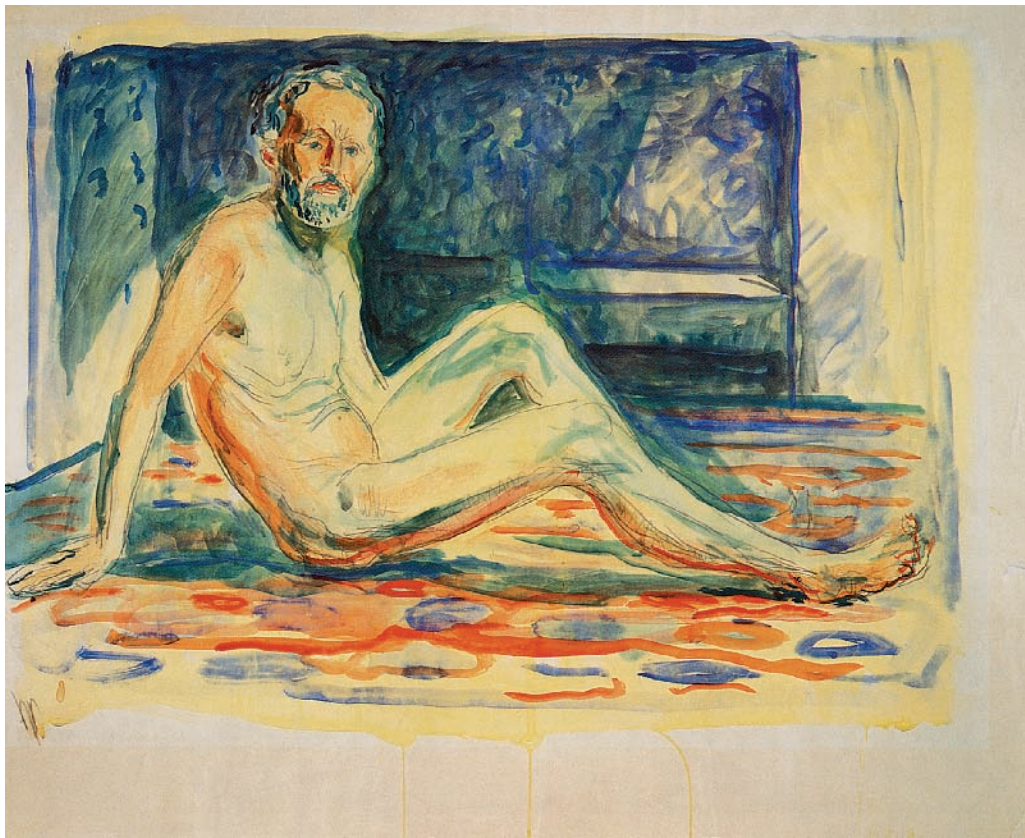


which he bought in 1916, he created studios to display the latest versions of his *Frieze*. He was unable to stop this endless reworking, which did not always improve on the original. One new departure was his concentration on painting nudes. These days all sexual interest in women seemed to be at an end, and his eye regarded them dispassionately, even slightly cruelly.

Self-Portrait as Reclining Nude

1933-1934

Pencil and watercolour on paper, 70 x 86 cm
Munch Museum, Oslo





He embraced the nobility of the worker in his somewhat naïve celebrations of cabbage-pickers and snow-shovellers (*Workers Returning Home*, 1915), and hoped to foster a social climate in which the rule of the people would hold sway. The commission to decorate the walls of the canteen at the Freia Chocolate Factory in Oslo (1921–1922) was a direct

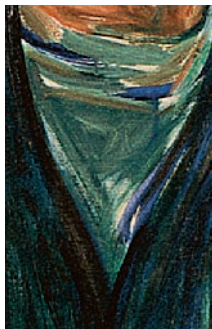
Springtime Landscape with Red House

1935

Oil on canvas, 100 x 130 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





result of this philosophy. His last years were ones of failing health and also failure to come to terms with the tremendous social and political changes wrought by World War I. The celebration of his seventieth birthday in 1933 was, however, a gratifying recognition of all that he had achieved; but soon afterwards, the rise of Nazism in Germany and the categorising of his work as 'Degenerate Art' was a slap in the face from his

Self-Portrait by the Window

c. 1940

Oil on canvas, 84 x 108 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo





spiritual home. The outbreak of World War II upset and depressed him. The final act came when an explosion, the first of the war in Norway, broke the windows of his house at Ekely in late 1943 and he died of the resulting chill on 23 January 1944. He was just eighty years old; he was tired and had no more to give.



Self-Portrait between Bed and Clock

1940-1943

Oil on canvas, 149.5 x 120.5 cm

Munch Museum, Oslo



Notes

- ¹ Quoted in J.P. Hodin, *Edvard Munch*, World of Art series, London 1972, p. 22.
- ² Sketchbook T127, Munch Museum archives.
- ³ Reinhold Heller, *Munch: His Life and Work*, London 1984, p. 66.
- ⁴ Diary, St-Cloud, 1889, quoted in Hodin, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
- ⁵ Ms T2760, p. 44, Munch Museum archives, quoted in Heller, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
- ⁶ Letter to Jappe Nilssen, c. 23 May 1912, quoted in Heller, *op. cit.*, p. 211.
- ⁷ Jean Leymarie, "Expressionism", *Pall Mall Encyclopædia of Art*, London and New York 1971.

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