



Edvard Munch biography

SYNOPSIS

Painter Edvard Munch, born in 1863 in Løten, Norway, established a free-flowing, psychological-themed style all his own. His painting *The Scream* is one of the most recognizable works in the history of art. Later works were less intense, but his legacy was ensured by his earlier, darker paintings. As a testament to his importance, *The Scream* sold in 2012 for over \$119 million, setting a new record.

BIOGRAPHY

Edvard Munch was born on December 12, 1863, in Løten, Norway, the second of five children. In 1864, Munch moved with his family to the city of Oslo, where his mother died four years later of tuberculosis. This was the beginning of a series of familial tragedies in Munch's life: His sister Sophie also died of tuberculosis in 1877 at the age of 15, another of his sisters spent most of her life institutionalized for mental illness, and his one brother died of pneumonia at age 30.

In 1879, Munch began attending a technical college to study engineering but left just a year later when his interest in art overtook his interest in engineering. In 1881, he enrolled at the Royal School of Art and Design. The next year, he rented a studio with six other artists and entered his first show, at the Industries and Art Exhibition.

Three years of study and practice later, Munch received a scholarship and traveled to Paris, where he spent three weeks. After returning to Oslo, Munch began working on new paintings, one of which was *The Sick Child*, which he would finish in 1886. In what would be seen as the first work to represent Munch's break from the realist style, the painting symbolically captures intense emotion on the canvas—that surrounding the death of his sister some eight years before.

From 1889 (the year his father died) to 1892, he lived mainly in France, funded by state scholarships, embarking on the most productive, and troubled, period of his artistic life. It was at this stage that he undertook a series of paintings that he called the Frieze of Life, for which he created 22 works for a 1902 Berlin exhibition. With paintings bearing such titles as *Melancholy*, *Jealousy*, *Despair*, *Anxiety* and *The Scream*—the last of which, painted in 1893, would go on to become one of the most

Edvard Munch was a Norwegian painter who has become widely known for his iconic pre-Expressionist painting *The Scream*.

famous paintings ever produced—Munch's mental state was on full display, and his style varied greatly depending on which emotion had taken hold of him while working on each particular painting. The collection was a huge success, and Munch soon became a known entity in the art world, finding brief happiness in a life otherwise colored by excessive drinking, family misfortune and mental distress.

Success was not enough to tame Munch's inner demons for long, and as the 1900s began, his drinking became out of control. In 1908, hearing voices and suffering paralysis on one side, he collapsed and soon checked himself into a private sanitarium, where he drank less and regained some mental composure. In spring of 1909, he checked out, eager to get back to work, but as history would show, most of his great works were behind him.

He moved to a country house in Ekely, Norway, where he began painting landscapes, living in isolation. He nearly died of influenza in the pandemic of 1918-1919 but recovered and survived until 1944. He painted right up to his death, often depicting his deteriorating condition and various physical maladies.

In May 2012, Munch's *The Scream* went on the auction block and sold for more than \$119 million at Sotheby's in New York, a record-breaking price, sealing its reputation as one of the most famous and important works of art ever produced.

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