

Art Appreciation
"The Scream" by Edvard Munch, 1893



Today in Art Appreciation we presented information about "The Scream", created by Edvard Munch in 1893. Munch was born in Loten, Norway in 1863 and grew up in Christiania (now Oslo). Most of his adult life though was spent living a nomadic style life in Paris and Berlin as an artist. He returned to Norway in 1910 and remained there till his death in 1944. Upon his passing, he left many of his works to the city of Oslo, and the city opened the Munch Museum in 1963. The museum has approximately 1100 paintings, 4500 drawings, and 18,000 prints and serves as Munch's official Estate. Munch's work follows the Expressionist method, which is all about emotion. He lost his mother and sister to tuberculosis during his childhood. This loss of loved ones can be profoundly seen in many of his works as they display the darker tones of life such as misery, illness and death. He also suffered illness during his childhood and adult life. Munch's work not only included paintings, but also lithographs and wood carvings. There are four versions of "The Scream", paintings in 1893 (version above), 1895, and 1910, and then one lithograph in 1895. The painting above was actually stolen, but thankfully recovered in the 1990's.

We discussed reasons "why" the subject in the painting could be screaming. We also covered the use of colors in the background and how they affected what emotions we thought Munch was trying to convey. The students then created their own version of "The Scream", creating personal backgrounds around the screamer. It was stressed to use non-violent subject matter, as an act of nature is what inspired this version.

This work was inspired by a volcanic eruption in Krakatoa (now Indonesia) in 1883. The sound was heard continents away and actually caused the sky to become a tinted red due to the ash left in the air. This ash could be seen over most of Europe, Asia, and even the eastern United States from November 1883-February 1884. Munch described his inspiration for "The Scream":

"I was walking down the road with two friends when the sun set; suddenly, the sky turned as red as blood. I stopped and leaned against the fence, feeling unspeakably tired. Tongues of fire and blood stretched over the bluish black fjord. My friends went on walking, while I lagged behind, shivering with fear. Then I heard the enormous, infinite scream of nature."