

Fauves and Expressionists

Fauves and Expressionists

From Van Dongen to Otto Dix

Masterpieces from the Von der Heydtmuseum in Wuppertal

The museum was founded in Elberfeld, later Wuppertal-Elberfeld, (in the Rhineland near Dusseldorf) in 1902. The region which concentrated the iron and textile industries of the early 20th century was one of the richest in Germany. The collections were donated by the local industrialists and financiers notably the bankers August and Edward von der Heydt. The Brennscheidt-Stiftung and Renate und Eberhard Robke Stiftung, are the current foundations that continue in this strong German tradition of industrial patronage of the arts. Another historical local art institution was the Barmer Kunstverein (founded in 1866 – now the Kunst- und Museumsverein Wuppertal). Both were pioneering institutions in exhibiting modern art in Germany in the years before the First World War: the Blaue Reiter artists, Adolf Erbslöh, Alexej von Jawlensky, Oskar Kokoschka, August Macke, Franz Marc, Emil Nolde and Marianne Werefkin among others. The joint collection of the two museums is today one of the greatest in Germany and particularly strong in German, European and American modern art. The current Marmottan exhibition is only a small sampling of the early 20th century French and German Expressionist works in the collections.

Art movements in exhibition:

Fauvism

Les Fauves (French for The Wild Beasts) were a short-lived and loose grouping of early 20th century artists whose works emphasized painterly qualities and strong colour over the representational or realistic values retained by Impressionism. While Fauvism as a style began around 1900 and continued beyond 1910, the movement as such lasted only three years, 1905–1907 and was inaugurated by a famous exhibition at the Salon d'Automne in Paris in October 1905. The leaders of the movement were Henri Matisse and André Derain. Other artists included Albert Marquet, Charles Camoin, Louis Valtat, the Belgian painter Henri Evenepoel, Maurice Marinot, Jean Puy, Maurice de Vlaminck, Alfred Maurer, Henri Manguin, Raoul Dufy, Othon Friesz, Georges Rouault, the Dutch painter Kees van Dongen and Georges Braque.

The paintings of the Fauves were characterised by seemingly wild brush work and strident colours, while their subject matter had a high degree of simplification and abstraction. Fauvism can be classified as an extreme development of Van Gogh's Post-Impressionism fused with the pointillism of Seurat and other Neo-Impressionist painters, in particular Paul Signac. Other key influences were Paul Cezanne and Paul Gauguin, whose employment of areas of saturated colour—notably in paintings from Tahiti—strongly influenced Derain's work at Collioure in Fauvism can also be seen as a mode of early 20th century Expressionism.

Fauve artists in Marmottan exhibition:

Georges Braque (1882 – 1963), Robert Delaunay (1885 – 1941), Raoul Dufy (1877 – 1953), Auguste

Herbin (1882 – 1960), Kees van Dongen (1877 – 1968), Maurice de Vlaminck (1876 – 1958)

Die Brücke

Die Brücke (The Bridge) was a group of German artists formed in Dresden in 1905. Founding members were Fritz Bleyl, Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. Later members were Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein and Otto Mueller. These artists had a major impact on the evolution of modern art in the 20th century and created the style of Expressionism. The founding members of Die Brücke in 1905 were four Jugendstil architecture students: Fritz Bleyl (1880-1966), Erich Heckel (1883-1970), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938) and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976).

Die Brücke rebelled against the traditional academic styles taught in German art schools and sought a new mode of artistic expression, which would form a bridge (hence the name) between the past and the present. They responded both to past “primitive” German artists such as Albrecht Dürer, Matthias Grünewald and Lucas Cranach, as well as contemporary international avant-garde movements like Fauvism and Cubism. As part of the affirmation of their national heritage, they revived older media, particularly woodcut prints. The group developed a common style based on vivid color, emotional tension, violent imagery, and an influence from primitivism particularly African and Polynesian tribal art.

The group members initially "isolated" themselves in a working-class neighborhood of Dresden, aiming thereby to reject their own bourgeois backgrounds. The group composed a manifesto (mostly Kirchner's work), which was carved on wood and asserted a new generation, "who want freedom in our work and in our lives, independence from older, established forces." In September and October 1906, the first group exhibition was held in the showroom of K.F.M. Seifert and Co. in Dresden. Emil Nolde (1867-1956) and Max Pechstein (1881-1955) joined the group in 1906. Bleyl married in 1907, and left the group. Otto Mueller (1874-1930) joined in 1910. Between 1907 and 1911, the Brücke artists spent the summers at the Moritzburg lakes and on the island of Fehmarn. In 1911, Kirchner moved to Berlin. The group was dissolved in 1913.

Die Brücke and Expressionist artists in Marmottan exhibition:

Max Beckmann (1884 – 1950), Erich Heckel (1883-1970), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), Oskar Kokoschka (1886 – 1980), William Morgner (1891 – 1917), Otto Mueller (1874-1930), Emil Nolde (1867-1956), Max Pechstein (1881-1955), Christian Rohlf (1849 – 1938), Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976)

Der Blaue Reiter

Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) was a group of artists who were originally members of the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM) in Munich. The movement was founded in 1911 and lasted until 1914, and forms the other aspect of German Expressionism before the First World War. Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, August Macke, Alexej von Jawlensky, Marianne von Werefkin, Gabriele Münter, Lyonel Feininger, Albert Bloch and others founded the group in response to the rejection of a Kandinsky painting by for a NKVM exhibition. Paul Klee was also involved. The name comes from Kandinsky's frequent use of horses and riders (notably St George) in his work and the spiritual meaning he attached to the color blue. It was given to the group's first publication, Der Blaue Reiter Almanach (The Blue Rider Almanac) conceived in June 1911 and published in early 1912.

Within the group, artistic approaches and aims varied from artist to artist; however, the artists shared a common desire to express spiritual truths through their art. They believed in the promotion of modern art; the connection between visual art and music; the spiritual and symbolic associations of color; and a spontaneous, intuitive approach to painting. Members were interested in European medieval art, Russian and Bavarian folk art, primitivism, as well as modern French art. As a result of their encounters with Cubist, Fauve and Rayonist ideas, they moved towards abstraction.

Der Blaue Reiter organized exhibitions in 1911 and 1912 that toured Germany. The almanac featured contemporary, primitive and folk art, along with children's paintings and favored, like Die Brücke, the revival of woodcut printing. In 1913 they exhibited in the first German Herbstsalon. The group was disrupted by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Franz Marc and August Macke were killed in combat. Wassily Kandinsky, Marianne von Werefkin and Alexej von Jawlensky were forced to move back to Russia because of their Russian citizenship. There were also differences in opinion within the group. As a result, Der Blaue Reiter was short-lived, lasting for only three years from 1911 to 1914.

Blaue Reiter and NKVM artists in Marmottan exhibition:

Vladimir Bechteljeff (1878 – 1971) (member of NKVM 1909-12), Adolf Erbslöh (1881 – 1947) (secretary of NKVM 1909), Alexei von Jawelensky (1864 – 1941), Wassily Kandinsky (1866 – 1944), Franz Marc (1880 – 1916), August Macke (1887 – 1914), Gabrielle Münter (1877 – 1962)

Neue Sachlichkeit

The New Objectivity (in German, Neue Sachlichkeit), was an art movement that arose in Germany in the early 1920s as an outgrowth of, and in opposition to, expressionism. The movement essentially ended in 1933 with the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Nazis to power. The term is applied to works of pictorial art, literature, music, and architecture. Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, who was the director of the Kunsthalle in Mannheim, coined the term in 1923 in a letter he sent to colleagues describing an exhibition he was planning. He identified two groups: the Verists, who "tear the objective form of the world of contemporary facts and represent current experience in its tempo and fevered temperature;" and the Magical Realists (whom he also called "classicists"), who "search more for the object of timeless ability to embody the external laws of existence in the artistic sphere."

Although the distinction between Verists and Magic Realists is in fact rather fluid, the Verists can be thought of as the more revolutionary wing of the New Objectivity, epitomized by Otto Dix and George Grosz. Their vehement form of realism distorted appearances to emphasize the ugly, as ugliness was the reality these artists wished to expose. This art was raw, provocative, and harshly satirical. Other important Verists include Christian Schad, Rudolf Schlichter, Georg Scholz (in his early work), and Karl Hubbuch. Max Beckmann, who never considered himself part of any movement, is a giant among the Verists even though he is sometimes called an expressionist.

Compared to the Verists, the Magic Realists more clearly exemplify the post-World War I "return to order" that arose in the arts throughout Europe, and that found expression in neoclassicism. The Magic Realists, including Anton Räderscheidt, Georg Schrimpf, Alexander Kanoldt, and Carl Grossberg were a diverse group that encompassed the nearly photographic realism of Schad and the gentle neo-primitivism of Schrimpf. The paintings of Räderscheidt show echos of the metaphysical art of the Italians Giorgio de Chirico and Carlo Carrà. Albert Renger-Patzsch and August Sander are leading representatives of the "New Photography" movement, which brought a sharply focused, documentary quality to the photographic art where previously the self-consciously poetic had held sway.

Neue Sachlichkeit artists in Marmottan exhibition:

Otto Dix 1891-1969, George Grosz 1893-1959

Other Artists:

Edvard Munch (1863 – 1944)

