

German Expressionism

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Paris Art
Studies – German Expressionism

Die
Brücke (the
Bridge)

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 (Art Nouveau) architecture students: Fritz Bleyl (1880-1966), Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.

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. Their meeting place was Heckel's studio on Berlinstrasse in an old butcher's shop. Heckel was the main administrator and organizer of events and exhibitions. 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 and Max Pechstein joined the group in 1906. Bleyl married in 1907, and left the group. Otto Mueller 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. Their art is received its first public acclaim when shown along that of the French modern masters in the great Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne in 1912. The group was dissolved with much bitterness and recriminations in 1913.

Die Brücke and Expressionist artists in Pinacothèque exhibition:

Otto Gutfreund (1889-1927), Erich Heckel (1883-1970), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881-1919), Otto Mueller (1874-1930), Emil Nolde (1867-1956), Max Pechstein (1881-1955), Christian Rohlf (1849 – 1938), Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976)

Der Blaue Reiter (the Blue Rider)

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 artists in Pinacothèque exhibition:

Heinrich Campendock
(1889-1957), Natalia Goncharova
(1881-1962), Alexei von Jawelensky

(1864 – 1941), Wassily Kandinsky
(1866 – 1944), Mikhail Larionov
(1881-1964), Franz Marc (1880 –
1916), August Macke (1887 – 1914),
Gabrielle Münter (1877 – 1962)
Marianne von Werefkin (1860-1938)