

Key Ideas: Expressionist Movements

General

- Expressionists deliberately depart from nature to get beyond surface appearance; to reveal the inner essence of things and enhance emotional feelings about their subjects.
- Artists use distortion of color, line, shape, etc. to heighten the emotional impact.
- Most Expressionist works represent a highly personal or greatly political reaction to contemporary life.

Fauvism 1905-1908

- First of the major avant-garde developments in European art between the turn of the century and WWI.
- Group of French artists whose primary figures were Henri Matisse, André Derain and Maurice de Vlaminck.
- Arbitrary use of intense, pure colors and bold, undisguised brushstrokes to heighten emotional and decorative effect, but also to represent space in the manner of Cézanne.
- Exhibited together at the Salon d'Automne of 1905. Named *Les Fauves* (“Wild Beasts”) by art critic Louis Vauxcelles.

Die Brücke (The Bridge) 1905-1913

- Earliest organized group of German Expressionist artists; founded in Dresden in 1905 by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.
- Committed to representing contemporary life. Looking for ways to break away from constricting morality to achieve self-discovery.
- Politically motivated to change the way things were: envisioned themselves as a bridge from the past into the future.
- Vitality of images achieved through distortion and simplification of form and design:
 - Jagged angular lines (in part derived from medieval woodcuts and African art).
 - Garish, often unnatural colors (some influenced by Fauvism), often aggressive brushstrokes.

(over)

Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) 1911-1913

- Major figures were Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc.
- Not an association or organization, loosely formed group in Munich in 1911.
- Concerned with the spiritual aspects of art, more philosophical than political.
- Concerned with humans' relationship to nature.
- Considered paintings, like music, to be poetic universal statements.
- Sought artistic expression untainted by convention (looked at Children's art, Bavarian folk art, medieval art, some far Eastern art, some African art).

abstraction – art that does not represent recognizable objects, having only intrinsic form with little or no attempt at pictorial representation; the imitation of nature is abandoned.