

Press Release

Welcome to the reopening of the Moderna Museet's main hall for temporary exhibitions

German Expressionism – The Artist Group Brücke and the Beginnings of Modernism

21 September 2024–9 March 2025

The artist group Brücke was founded in 1905 in Dresden by four young, rebellious architecture students. With their collective way of living and working, they radically broke with the prevailing strict moral norms and aesthetic ideals of the German Empire. Brücke's art marks the beginning of German Expressionism, which would eventually be recognised as Germany's most important contribution to international modernism.

In Moderna Museet's extensive exhibition, viewers encounter around 180 works – including paintings, drawings, watercolours, woodcuts, and sculptures – by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Fritz Bleyl, Erich Heckel, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, the four founders of Brücke, as well as by Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein, and Otto Mueller, members who joined later.

The name *Brücke*, “bridge” in German, has often been interpreted as an allusion to the group's endeavour to create a link between the art of the past and the future.

Emotions, Man, and Nature

Brücke developed a painting style with vivid colours, simplified forms, broken-up perspectives, and large colour fields that express feelings rather than reproducing an external reality.

The group was inspired by artists such as Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, and Edvard Munch. They worked with motifs such as man and nature, painted portraits and self-portraits, engaged in nude studies, and depicted life in the studio, striving to make life and art merge. After they moved to the capital Berlin in late 1911, urban life also became an important motif.

Manifesto and New Strategies

From the very beginning, Brücke used clear strategies to market and spread their art, which served as an inspiration to future generations of artists. They formulated a manifesto, invited supporting members, organised their own exhibitions, and toured them between different cities in Germany. They also designed their own catalogues and posters, employing woodcuts as an important medium.

Over time, Brücke's members developed in different directions, and the group disbanded in 1913.

“High Time for a Meeting in Scandinavia”

- Although Brücke's art has been highlighted in many international exhibitions and publications over the years, this is the first opportunity for a Scandinavian audience to have an in-depth encounter with the artist group Brücke, says Iris Müller-Westermann, the exhibition's curator and senior curator at Moderna Museet.

Gitte Ørskou, Director of Moderna Museet:

- The new exhibition also means that once again, we welcome the public into the museum's main hall for temporary exhibitions, which has been closed for over a year due to maintenance work. And it is especially nice to be able to reopen the hall with the artist group Brücke, which has been so important to the entire art of the 20th century.

The exhibition includes a catalogue published by Moderna Museet in collaboration with Hirmer Verlag. It comprises 280 richly illustrated pages with essays by scholars of German Expressionism. The editor is Iris Müller-Westermann. It also contains in-depth discussions about how the view of Brücke's motifs has changed over time, and, not least of all, it addresses both the unequal power relationship between the artists and their young nude models and the prevailing colonial perspective of the period.

The exhibition's architecture and graphic design have been created by Sonja Beeck and Detlef Daiber-Weitz at chezweitz GmbH, Büro für museale und urbane Szenografie, Berlin.

Moderna Museet's exhibition consists of works from prominent international collections. It is part of a collaboration with the Brücke-Museum in Berlin, which was founded in 1967 and has the most extensive collection of works by the artist group Brücke in the world.

Press images are available for downloading at the press room.

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