



Sons of Norway
HERITAGE PROGRAMS



MiniPresentation#31

EDVARD MUNCH

EDVARD MUNCH

A Norwegian artist who has won worldwide recognition is the painter, Edvard Munch ('Muhnk). Already as a child he demonstrated his artistic talent and his extraordinary drawing skills. Like most other young people of his time, he started on a conventional education, but soon realized that he was going to be an artist. He was so serious about it that he quit the technical school he was enrolled in and went to an art school. He was seventeen at that time and the year was 1880.

Five years later we find Munch in Paris. At home he had been working with contemporary artists and exploring the current trends in Norway and Scandinavia. Now he was exposed to the latest developments in European art.

From 1892 he worked in **Berlin, Germany**, and this is where he first won a name for himself. An exhibit in the very first of his Berlin years caused a sensation, but also a great deal of controversy. Munch's art was not of the pretty postcard type so common in the Romantic period, neither could it really be compared to other prevailing trends. His art was new and original—he was a pioneer and trend setter. As such, he inspired other young painters in the art community.

Munch's personal life was not always easy. He took on a tremendous workload and lived a hectic life. Moreover, he was prone to depression due to family problems. He grew up in a highly cultured home, but his father's somewhat gloomy nature and the untimely deaths of his mother and older sister made a deep impression on his sensitive mind. In 1908 he had a nervous breakdown, but this episode in his life proved beneficial in the long run for he had to start a new chapter of his life.

Munch moved back to Norway after years abroad and started working there. His art was now getting recognition everywhere. But he was not thrilled with the side effects of being famous—being a public figure bothered him. In the 1920s and '30s he lived in almost **complete seclusion** at his estate outside Oslo, producing a large amount of art.

When Munch died in 1944, it turned out that he had willed all the works in his possession to the city of Oslo. This magnificent gift comprised some 1,200 paintings, 4,500 drawings, 15,000 prints and six sculptures. Among his possessions were also lithographic stones, wood-cut blocks, etching plates and a large collection of notes, books, newspaper cuttings and other documents. To give this tremendous gift to the public, the city council of Oslo decided to build a **Munch Museum**. The project was delayed by post-war building restrictions, but was finally opened in 1963. In addition to Munch's own art and papers, his sister, Inger (Ing'ehr) gave the museum paintings, drawings and Munch's correspondence.

A visit to the Munch Museum is a true introduction to the artist's life and work. A library and a technical department for restoration work and photography add to the usability of the building. The exhibition section is designed to allow for film showings, lectures, and concerts. The Munch Museum thus represents a vital and expanding force in the cultural life of Norway—an unusual and exciting memorial for a great artist.